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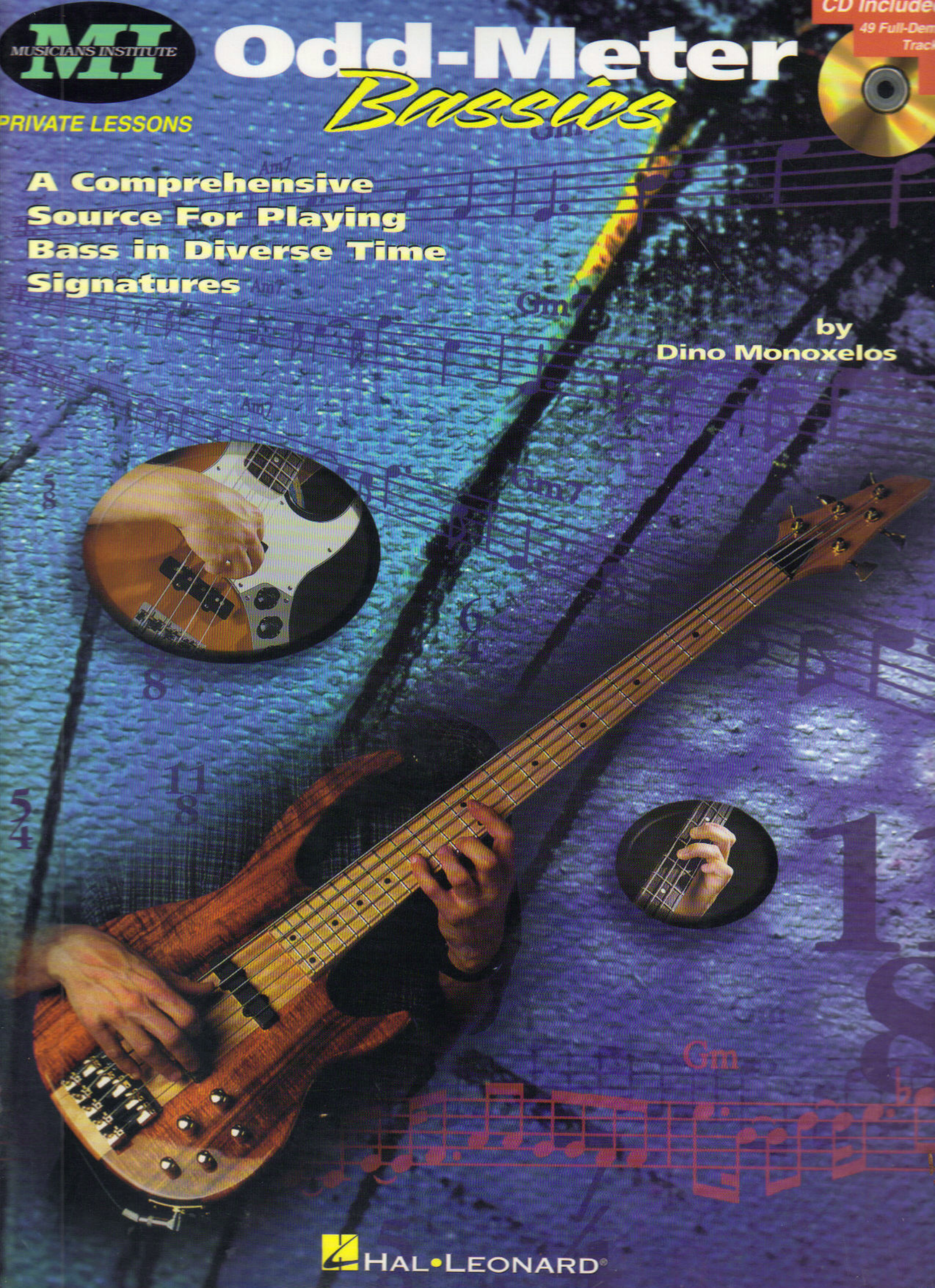

MUSICIANS INSTITUTE
PRIVATE LESSONS
Odd-Meter Basics
CD Include
49 Full-Dem
Track
A Comprehensive Source For Playing Bass in Diverse Time Signatures
by
Dino Monoxelos
HAL•LEONARD®

Foreword

Up until this book was written, any bassists who wanted to study odd meter had to buy drum books. This was often frustrating for bass players, and thus they would not explore this exciting musical realm. Thankfully, Dino Monoxelos has filled that educational void with this excellent book.

I first became aware of Dino's great skill in playing odd time signatures when I was an instructor at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, California. Dino was the instructor for the Odd Meter Live Playing Workshop, and I was constantly amazed by the ease with which he navigated through complex rhythms and mystifying odd meters. Now that he has put his approach to playing odd meters in print, I can better understand how he can do what he does.

I urge you to study this book carefully and meticulously. Be patient with yourself and follow each one of Dino's exercises to a tee. By the way, I have been a professional bassist since 1984, and I learned a great deal from this book!

Sincerely,
Dale Titus
Editor, *Bass Frontiers*

Table of Contents

		Page	CD Track
Introduction			
	A Brief History of Odd Meter	4	
	About This Book	4	
	The Intimidation Factor	5	
	Time Signatures	5	
How to Use This Book			
	The Clap!	6	
	Using the Exercises, Ideas, and Charts	7	
Tuning			1
CHAPTERS			
1	The 2+3 Subdivision	8	2
2	3/4 and 3/8	10	3-6
3	6/4 and 6/8	16	7-15
4	12/8	23	16-21
5	5/4 and 5/8	27	22-28
6	7/4 and 7/8	34	29-37
7	9/8	42	38-42
8	11/8	46	43-46
9	Multiple-Meter Charts	50	47-49
10	Playing over the Bar Line	52	
About the Author		55	

Introduction

A Brief History of Odd Meter

So what exactly is *odd meter?* Is it music that is odd or strange? Well, to some extent, yes! Odd meter is basically any music written in or containing odd-numbered time signatures such as 3/4, 5/4, 7/8, 9/8, etc. An odd meter could be explained as any meter that isn't in 2, 4, or 8. Could a meter of 12/8 be interpreted as an odd meter? It all depends on how it is subdivided.

One could write an entire book on the origin of odd meters and their significance in the music of certain cultures. I recommend reading *Rhythm & Tempo* by Curt Sachs (W.W. Norton & Co., Inc. New York, NY). Being raised in a Greek household, I was always exposed to Greek music. Have you ever tried to dance at a Greek wedding? It's hard, because most traditional Greek songs are in either 5, 7, or sometimes 9/8. But there are certain dance steps used for this style of music. This also applies to many Eastern European and Middle Eastern cultures. No one is absolutely sure about the origin of odd meters, but I believe it could be dated back to biblical times in the Middle East—probably as far back as the first cavemen who banged two rocks together. It also applies to some African and South American cultures.

Odd meter is also used in certain classical pieces. One of the most commonly-known pieces was written by Igor Stravinsky in 1913, and called "The Rite of Spring." Stravinsky was known for his use of changing meters and polyrhythms. Frank Zappa credits Stravinsky as being one of his earliest influences.

When you think of weird or odd music, Frank Zappa definitely comes to mind as one of the most popular contemporary composers. He used odd meters as well as polyrhythms in a large amount of his work. The progressive rock bands of the seventies and eighties also made a career out of writing songs containing many odd-meter changes. Some of the more popular bands like Yes, Emerson, Lake & Palmer, King Crimson, and Rush, turned the rock 'n' roll world on its ear by incorporating large time signatures and polyrhythms in their compositions. Even pop bands of the nineties—from Sting to Pearl Jam—are using odd meters in their commercial hits.

Whether it's fusion, jazz, rock, pop, or Latin, odd meters play a large part in today's music.

About This Book

As a teacher, I have seen many great books about odd meters—mostly written by and addressed to drummers. Before writing this book, I had not seen any odd meter books for bass players. Some of the more popular odd meter books (for drummers) on the market today are *Odd Time Reading Text* by Louis Belleson and Gil Breines, *Even in the Odds* by Ralph Humphrey, and *2/3 or not 2/3* by Efrain Toro. I highly recommend these books in addition to this one.

Though this book is written for the bass, it can also be used by other musicians, not just bass players—it can help *anyone* get a good grasp of playing in odd meters. However, you will find all the examples are written in bass clef. If you are not familiar with bass clef, don't worry; it is more important to understand the subdivisions of the grooves pertaining to the different styles. Playing along with the CD and following the chord changes with your instrument is all you need to do.

The Intimidation Factor

There is an "intimidation factor" involved in playing odd meters. Some musicians think playing in odd meters means playing a weird piece of music with strange meter changes in it, or having to play something that is in, say, 19/16! That can be true in some cases, but for the most part, it can be as simple as playing the bass line to *Mission Impossible*. Sometimes when doing a T.V. jingle, the composer is given a certain amount of time to fill with music. The entire piece of music could be written in 4/4, except there is five seconds of silence at the end. To lengthen the piece, the composer may decide to add an odd measure somewhere.

Sometimes odd meters are used to convey certain emotional feelings in songs. A quick-tempo 5/8 can convey the feeling of confusion or disarray. A slow tempo, 7/8 samba can be very relaxing.

Playing in odd meters should come as naturally to the musician as playing in 4/4. One other misconception I see quite often is when a student comes to me and plays something in 13/8, for example, and tells me how he or she spent days trying to figure something out in 13/8. The whole idea is to not "try" to figure anything out. If a groove comes naturally, and it happens to be in an odd meter, *great*. Then it's easy to play, right? If you have to sit down and figure something out, it could take days before it comes naturally. That's perfectly okay too! What I'm saying is, don't write something in an odd meter just for the sake of it being in an odd meter, unless of course you're the poor composer we talked about before. Some people spend months composing a piece of music with strange time changes in it just for the sake of being in odd meters, and the end result isn't always music. Here is something that you can try: experiment playing with grooves in different meters, and record yourself while doing this. Then go back to the recording and hear what you just played, and *then* figure out what time it's in. I always have students coming to my class with an idea in their head, but they can't figure out what time it's in. They will play it for me while I record it, and then we'll both sit down and figure out what time it's in. At least in this case the idea feels so natural to them they have no problem remembering it!

Time Signatures

For those of you who aren't familiar with what a *time signature* means, here's a brief explanation. Let's take a 4/4 time signature. The top number will always tell us how many beats to a measure. In this case we have four beats to a measure. The bottom number will always tell us which type of note value receives one beat. In this case the bottom number four tells us each quarter note will receive one beat. Now, let's look at a 7/8 time signature! The top number—in this case, seven—tells us there are seven beats to each measure. The bottom number, eight, tells us the eighth note will receive one beat each. Whenever you hear someone refer to "a bar of seven," or "a bar of nine," or "this chart is in five," they are referring to the top number in the time signature. Whether the quarter note or eighth note receives the beat depends on the overall feel of the song. We will discuss this subject later.

How to Use This Book

The Clap!

You will notice that throughout this book you are being asked to clap out the exercises on your lap or chest before you pick up your bass and play them. This is extremely important. *Do not* play these exercises without being able to clap them out first. Each time signature has both examples and ideas. You must be able to tap out the exercises on your lap or a drum of some sort before playing the ideas on your bass. If you go straight to the ideas without working on the examples, the whole purpose of this book will be lost.

I've noticed when I show a student a groove in any odd meter, they don't have a problem repeating what I just played. The problem comes when they have to play the groove on their own, without any accompaniment. They start to guess where the beat is instead of actually knowing it. This can get complicated, especially when you're playing with a drummer who likes to play things over the bar line. I see a lot of students who, when trying out a new rhythm, attempt to play it on their bass first. The next thing you know, they're guessing the rhythm instead of knowing it. *Put the bass away!* Try to clap the rhythm first. If you have a hard time clapping the rhythm, what makes you think playing it on the bass will make it easier? Remember: if you can't clap it, you can't play it. The rhythm has to come from within. By clapping out these rhythms, you are internalizing everything in this book. Wouldn't you rather be able to feel 5/8 instead of having to count it out every time you play? When you play a funk line, you don't have to actually count "1+2+3+4+." You are so used to playing and being exposed to that meter, it has become internal. That is what you are doing with all these odd meters, internalizing them. You can go through this entire book without an instrument. All you need is a good sense of time and your own two hands. That's it! Some of these exercises may require some very simple hand/foot coordination. Like I said before, if you can play a funk line while tapping your foot to 4/4 time, you'll have no problems with this book.

One last thing to remember: as a bass player, chances are you will be playing some of the more simplified rhythms as ostinatos. This doesn't mean the sixteenth-note exercises aren't important. You must be able to feel the sixteenth note in order to play any style or meter. I can't stress this enough to my students. The greatest players in the world all have that one thing in common. Even if they're playing a simple quarter-note groove, they're still feeling that sixteenth-note pulse. In the examples, you'll usually see the groove broken down into sixteenth notes first, and then—just below that example—you'll see the ostinato. The ostinato is what you will actually be playing on the bass.

Using the Exercises, Ideas, and Charts

You will notice that for each time signature there are three different sections: the *examples*, the *ideas*, and then the *charts*. The book is set up so you can go from one section right to the next, within one specific time signature.

The examples are designed to show you how each time signature can be broken down into different subdivisions. When going through these exercises, all you should be doing is clapping exercises to familiarize or internalize each subdivision. When you've accomplished that, you can then move on to the ideas.

The ideas are set up to demonstrate different types of grooves that can be played on your bass. Nearly all of these ideas are derived from the different subdivisions you just practiced in the "exercise" section. Once this is done, you can then move on to the charts.

The charts are basic blues progressions (I–IV–Vs). I stuck with basic chord progressions to keep it simple. Remember: it's not your knowledge of chord structures we're working on here—it's how well you can play each time signature through a basic chord chart. Pay close attention to the subdivision in the first measure of each chart. This tells you what type of subdivision is being used throughout the chart. When you've mastered that, try using your own subdivisions by playing along with a drummer or drum machine.

The last section of the book includes a few charts for those of you who just can't get enough. These are some multi-meter charts; you can play along with the CD or with your own band. Pay close attention to the time changes and their respective subdivisions.

Good luck with this book. I truly hope it will shed some light on playing in odd meters!

Chapter 1

The 2+3 Subdivision

All meters, even the most common meters, are simply combinations of twos and threes. Just as computer code is nothing more than ones and zeros, the same is true for any type of meter. Let's take a bar of 5/8 for example. Remember, five beats per measure, and the eighth note receives the beat. Figure 1A shows us what a simple bar of 5/8 looks like.

Now look at figure 1B. Notice how it is subdivided into a section of two eighth notes and then a section of three eighth notes. This is a common subdivision of 5/8. We'll call this a 2+3 subdivision. Notice the accent markings in each grouping. Now, set your metronome up to 80 bpm—each click on the metronome will represent one eighth note. The eighth note is the largest common denominator for this particular meter. First clap figure 1A. Without using the accents, it's hard to determine where the bar starts and stops without having to count.

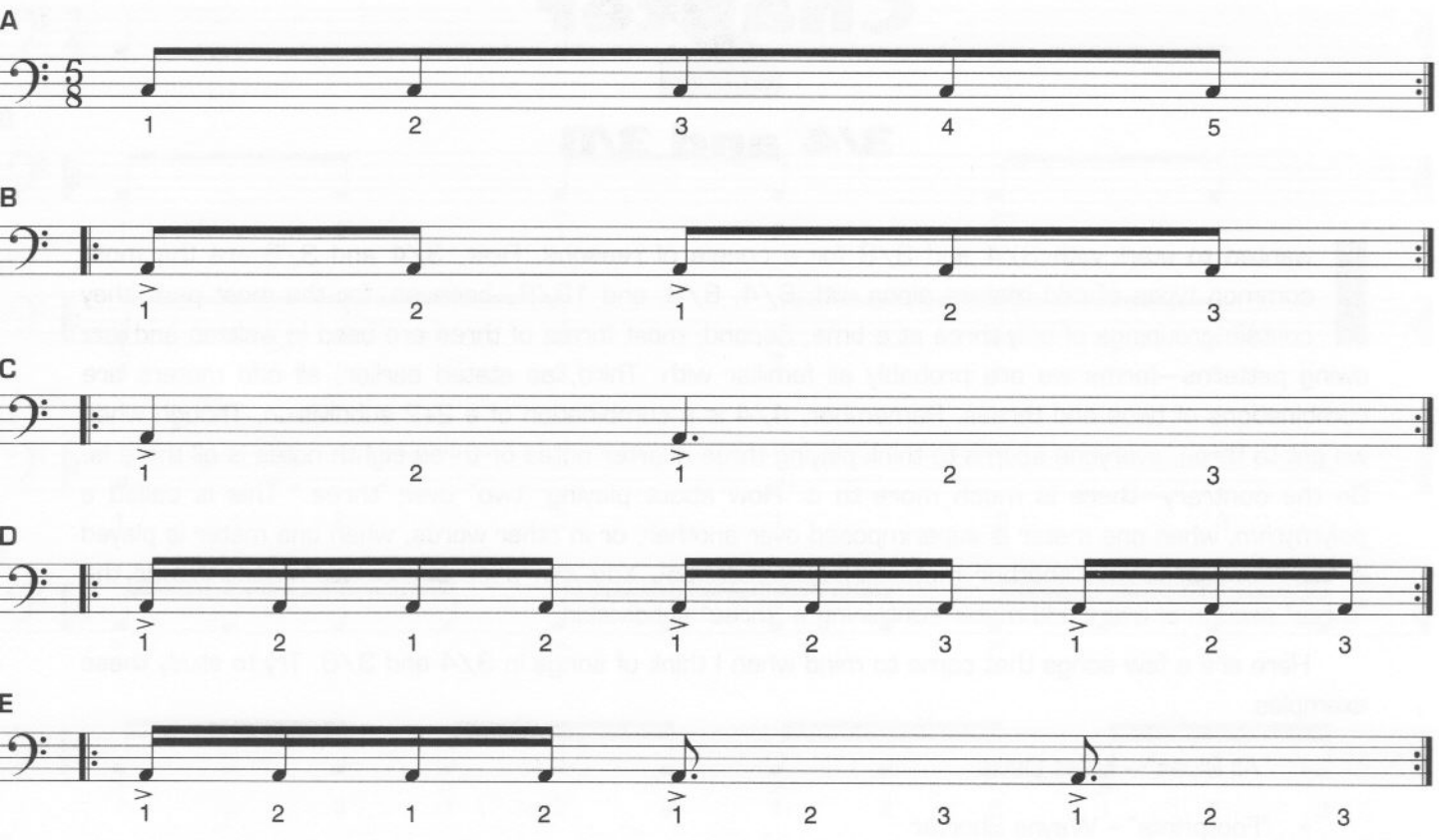
Now try clapping figure 1B, accenting each group. I want you to tap the eighth notes with both hands alternating on your chest or your lap, in the subdivisions we put them in, accenting each group slowly. If you lead with your right hand on the first time, the second time then makes you lead with your left hand and vice-versa. Try doing this first leading with your right hand then your left. This may seem awkward at first but will come to you with practice. These are basic rudiments drummers practice all the time. If it's too fast, feel free to slow the tempo on your metronome. By now you're probably asking why there are drum exercises in a bass book. This will improve your feel of the groove no matter what meter you are in or what instrument you play.

Now let's look at figure 1C. Nothing has changed as far as the time signature and the subdivision. Here we've combined the first group of two eighth notes into a quarter note, and the second group of three eighth notes into a dotted quarter note. Try clapping figure 1C with the metronome clicking off the five eighth notes. Again, if it's too fast or too complicated at first, turn the metronome to a slower tempo or even turn it off until you feel comfortable playing these exercises.

Now look at figure 1D. Again, nothing has been done to the time signature or the subdivisions. We took the first group of two eighth notes and broke them down into sixteenth notes. The last group of three eighth notes we broke down into six sixteenth notes. Instead of having a group of four sixteenth notes and a group of two sixteenth notes, we simply split them into two equal groups of three sixteenth notes. Try clapping this using two hands on your lap or chest.

In figure 1E, we now have two dotted eighth notes in the second grouping instead of a dotted quarter note like we had in figure 1C. Here's your workout for this chapter: Be able to clap figures 1B and 1D while tapping either figure 1C or 1E with your foot. Be able to alternate between all four combinations without stopping. Like I said earlier, if the metronome gets to be too confusing, turn it off and first work out the coordination between your hands and your feet. Start this and all the following exercise slowly! You don't want to create any bad habits!

2 Fig. 1: 2+3 Subdivision



Chapter 2

3/4 and 3/8

I wanted to start with 3/4 and 3/8 for a couple of reasons. First, 3/4 and 3/8 are the most common types of odd meters along with 6/4, 6/8, and 12/8—because, for the most part, they contain groupings of only three at a time. Second, most forms of three are used in waltzes and jazz swing patterns—forms we are probably all familiar with. Third, as stated earlier, all odd meters are combinations of twos and threes. Remember, 4/4 is a combination of a 2+2 subdivision. Though when we get to three, everyone seems to think playing three quarter notes or three eighth notes is all there is. On the contrary—there is much more to it. How about playing "two" *over* "three." This is called a *polyrhythm,* when one meter is superimposed over another, or in other words, when one meter is played in the same space as another meter. This is essential. You can superimpose a "two" feel over the "three" section of every odd meter containing a "three" subdivision.

Here are a few songs that come to mind when I think of songs in 3/4 and 3/8. Try to study these examples.

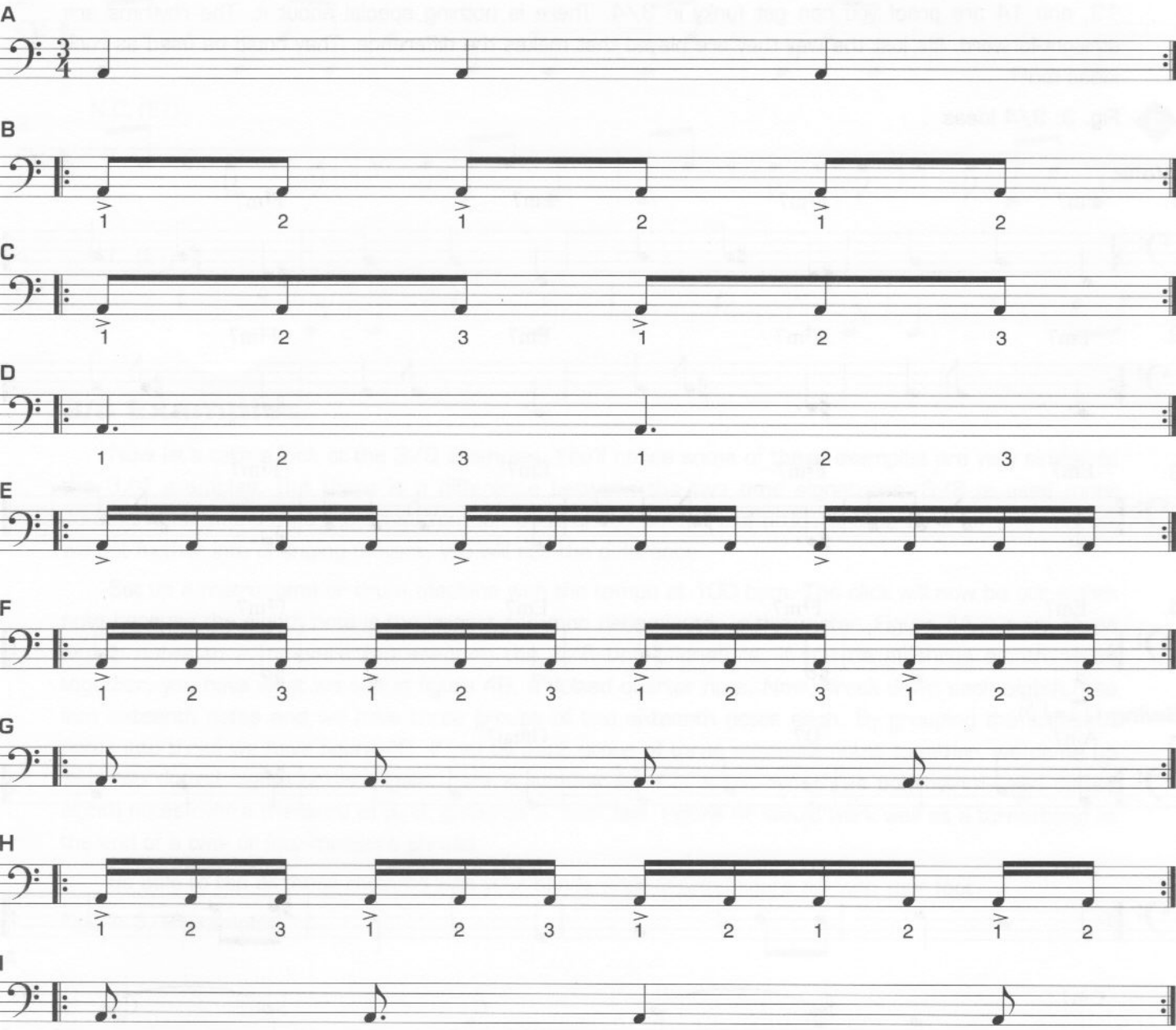
- "All Blues" – Miles Davis
- "Footprints" – Wayne Shorter
- "Manic Depression" – Jimi Hendrix
- "My Favorite Things" – R. Rodgers

3/4 Examples

Let's set up a metronome or a drum machine with the tempo at approximately 80 bpm. Remember, the click is the largest common denominator. In 3/4, it will click as the quarter note, and in 3/8 it will click as the eighth note. Experiment with the tempo so you can work on these exercises slowly at first. If it gets to be too much, go ahead and turn the metronome off until you feel comfortable.

Let's look at figure 2A. This is a common measure of 3/4. It looks pretty straight-ahead, three quarter notes to a measure. Now break the quarter notes down to eighth notes and you have figure 2B. Try to play figure 2A with your foot while tapping out figure 2B with your hands. Now, while still playing figure 2A with your foot, move down to figure 2C with your hands. This might be more difficult. Remember to follow the accents. Continue tapping down to figure 2G while keeping figure 2A in your foot. Figure 2D is a perfect example of a two-over-three polyrhythm. You are fitting two equal notes over three beats. Figure 2G is another example of a polyrhythm. You are fitting four equal notes over three beats, giving us a four-over-three polyrhythm. Polyrhythms are great to work on because they give the time signature a whole new feel. If you are playing two over three, you are implying a two feel in a 3/4 time signature. If you have trouble with figures 2F and 2G, try clapping 2F first while playing 2G with your foot. It's very important you get those dotted eighth notes and dotted quarter notes feeling comfortable.

Fig. 2: 3/4 Examples



3/4 Ideas

Here are some bass lines based on the 3/4 examples. Remember, you have to be able to clap the examples first before you pick up your bass and try these ideas. You will find that a lot of the sixteenth-note exercises we practice might be a little too busy to play on the bass. It is still very important to practice them. Even though you're not playing the sixteenth notes, it is very important you are feeling them—*in any time signature*. You will also notice some of these ideas can be played in a number of different styles, not just the one specified above the idea. Be sure to experiment with these ideas; you may be surprised with what you come up with. Play each idea all the way through without stopping and don't forget about the repeats. Try playing these ideas with the CD.

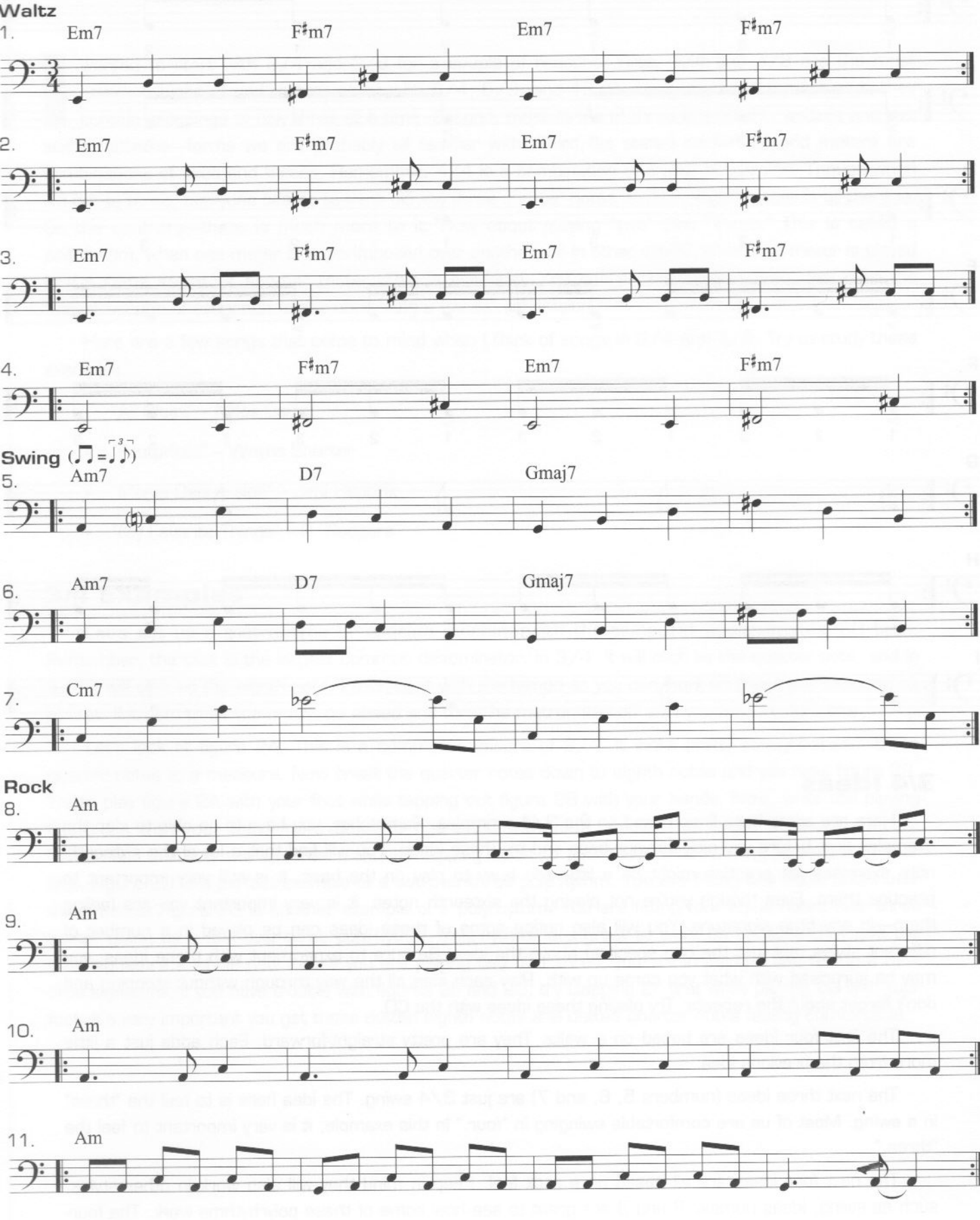
The first four ideas are based on a waltz. They are pretty straight-forward. Each adds just a little more from the previous idea.

The next three ideas (numbers 5, 6, and 7) are just 3/4 swing. The idea here is to feel the "three" in a swing. Most of us are comfortable swinging in "four." In this example, it is very important to feel the "three."

The next four ideas are all based on a rock feel. Keep in mind they will also work in other styles, such as swing. Ideas number 8 and 9 are great to see how some of these polyrhythms work. The four-

over-three works well as a turnaround at the end of a four-measure phrase like in number 8. Ideas 12, 13, and 14 are proof you can get funky in 3/4. There is nothing special about it. The rhythms are straight-forward. It's just the way they are played that makes the difference. They could be used as rock ideas too!

3 **Fig. 3: 3/4 Ideas**



Funk

12. N.C. (E7)

13. N.C. (E7)

14. N.C. (E7)

3/8 Examples

Now let's take a look at the 3/8 examples. You'll notice some of these examples are very similar to the 3/4 examples. But there is a difference between the two time signatures. 3/8 is used more commonly for swing-style patterns. You can think of 3/8 as sort of a double-time 3/4 for now, but as we get further into changing meters, you will see the difference.

Set up a metronome or drum machine with the tempo at 100 bpm. The click will now be our eighth note because the eighth note is the largest common denominator in this meter. Figure 4A is easy, three eighth notes to a measure representing the 3/8 time signature. If you tie all three eighth notes together, you have what we see in figure 4B, a dotted quarter note. Now, break down each eighth note into sixteenth notes and we have three groups of two sixteenth notes each. By grouping the sixteenth notes into three we have figure 4D. If you tie each group of three sixteenth notes together, we come up with two dotted eighth notes. Again, here is another form of a two-over-three polyrhythm—two dotted eighth notes over a measure of 3/8, giving us a "two" feel. Figure 4F would work well as a turnaround at the end of a two- or four-measure phrase.

Be able to tap all these rhythms with your hands while tapping figure 4A with your foot.

Fig. 4: 3/8 Examples

A

B

C

D

E

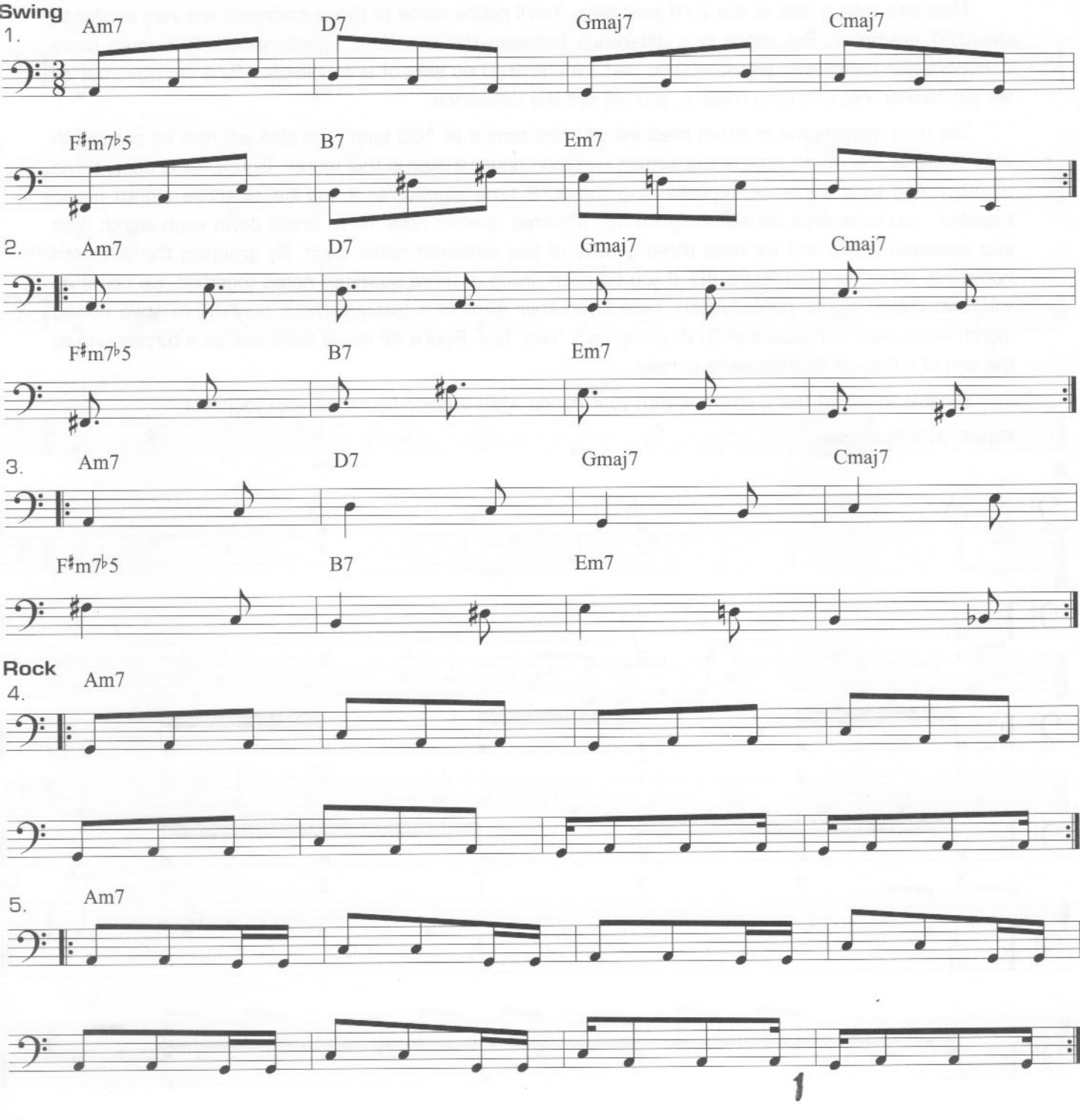
F

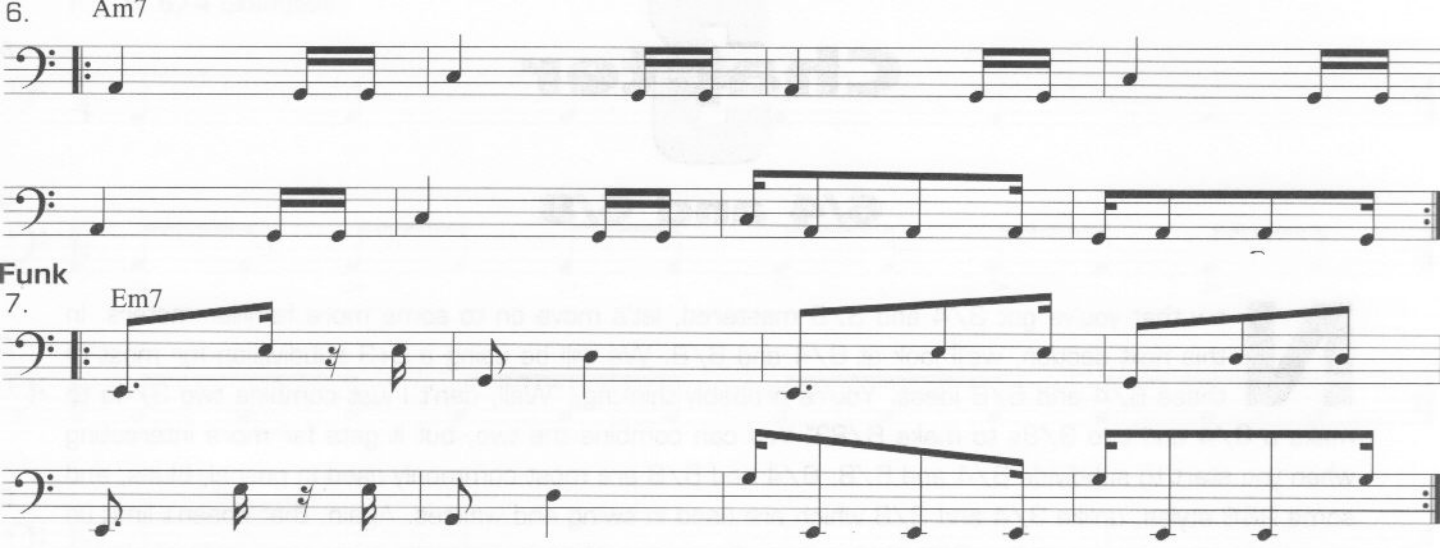
3/8 Ideas

Here are some 3/8 ideas you can work on. Remember, you must have the 3/8 clapping exercises down before you can move on to these ideas. Notice how the ideas in this section are all eight-measure phrases instead of the previous four-measure phrases. Idea 1 is just a 3/8 swing pattern over a common II–V–I chord progression. Idea 2 is the same progression, only we are now using the two-over-three polyrhythm to give it more of a "two" feel. Idea 3 is still a swing pattern, but you are implying a waltz feel just by adding that last eighth note on beat 3.

The next three ideas are some basic rock grooves adapted to fit the 3/8 time signature. Notice how figure 4F works as a turnaround at the end of some of these phrases. These rock ideas will work well as swing ideas too, especially the turnaround in figure 3F. It's all in how you play them. Idea 7 is proof you can play funk in 3/8 too. These funk ideas could work well in a swing feel and a rock feel too. Again, it's all in how you play them. Be sure to experiment with these ideas in different styles.

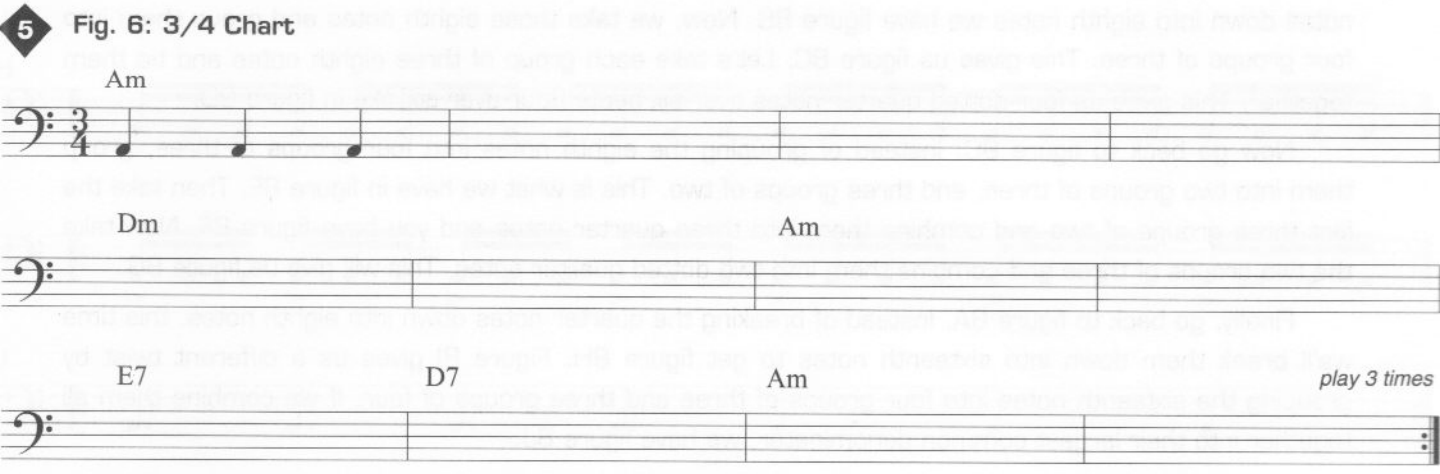
4 **Fig. 5: 3/8 Ideas**

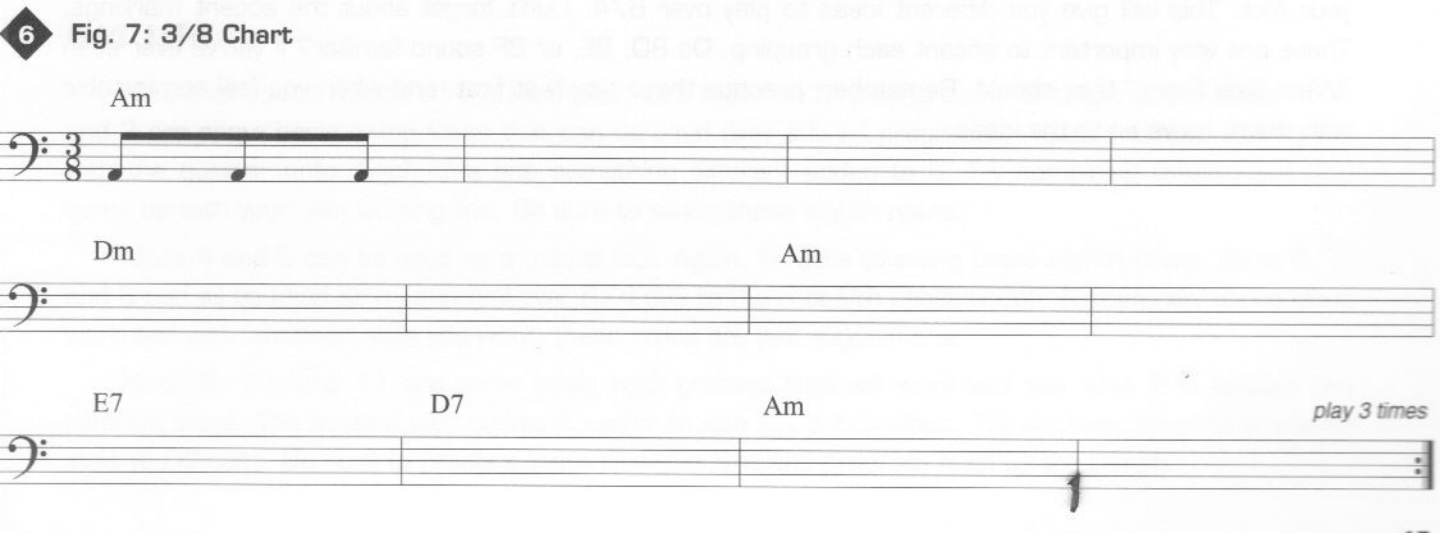




Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as you do the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions too. Remember, some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band intro trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters, too!





Chapter 3

6/4 and 6/8

Now that you've got 3/4 and 3/8 mastered, let's move on to some more familiar meters. In this next section, we'll look at 6/4 and 6/8. We will be using a 3+3 subdivision for most of these 6/4 and 6/8 ideas. You're probably thinking, "Well, can't I just combine two 3/4s to make a 6/4 and two 3/8s to make 6/8?" You can combine the two, but it gets far more interesting when you start to subdivide 6/4 and 6/8. 6/4 and 6/8 are most commonly used in gospel, blues, and some R&B styles, unlike 3/4 and 3/8 which are used in swing and waltzes. Again, that doesn't limit us to only those particular styles. Remember, learn the meter, then incorporate it into your style of playing whether it be rock, funk, jazz, etc.

6/4 Examples

Let's set up a metronome or a drum machine with the tempo at approximately 80 bpm. Remember, the click is the largest common denominator for whatever time you are in. In 6/4 it's the quarter note. Experiment with the tempo at first so you can work on these exercises slowly. If the metronome is too hard to play with, turn it off until you feel comfortable playing these exercises.

Let's take a look at some 6/4 exercises. Remember, you must practice these exercises before you can move on to playing the ideas.

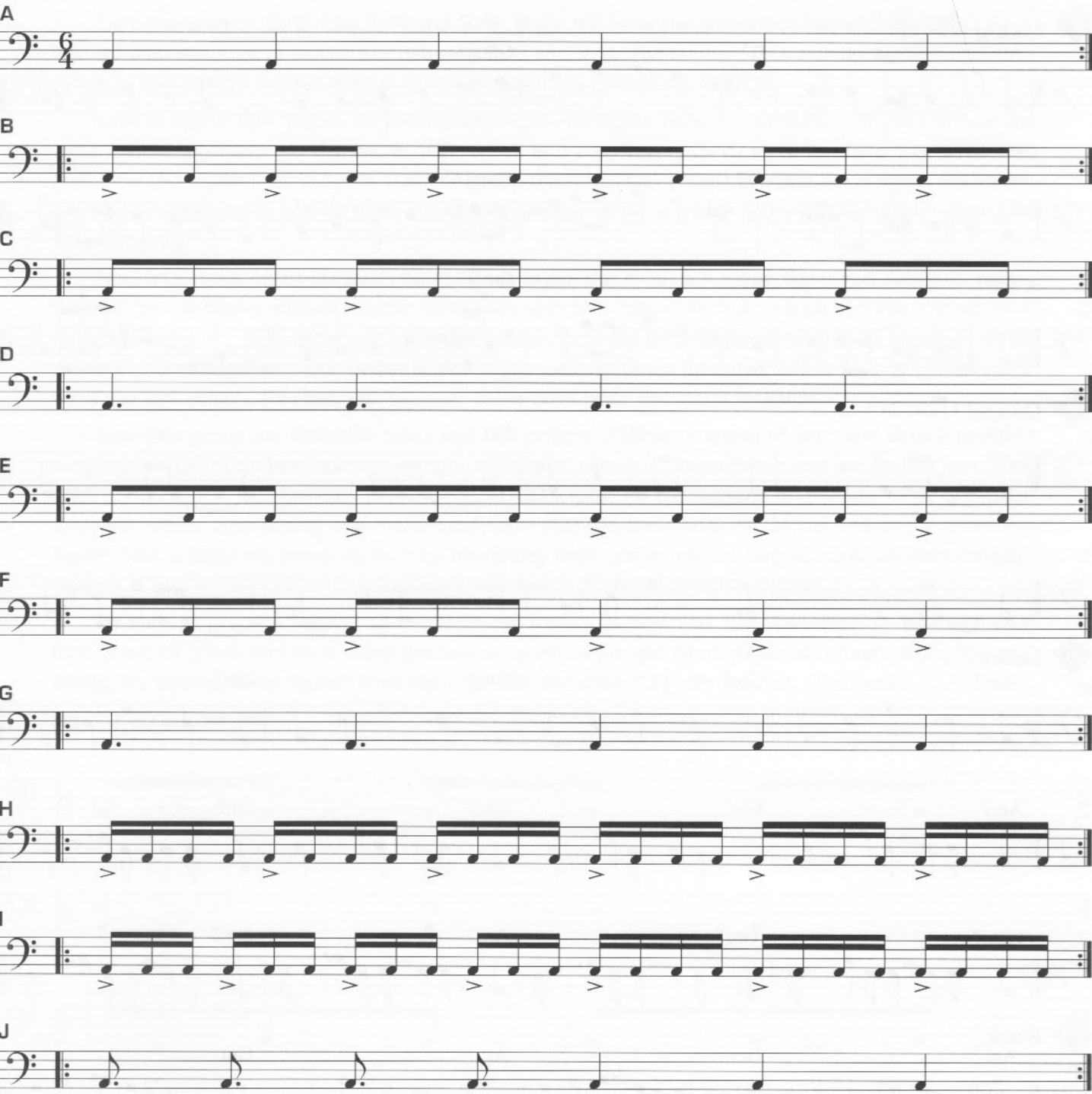
Figure 8A is pretty straight-forward—six quarter notes to a measure. If we break the six quarter notes down into eighth notes we have figure 8B. Now, we take those eighth notes and group them into four groups of three. This gives us figure 8C. Let's take each group of three eighth notes and tie them together. This gives us four dotted quarter notes over six beats (four over six) like in figure 8D.

Now go back to figure 8C. Instead of grouping the eighth notes into four groups of three, group them into two groups of three, and three groups of two. This is what we have in figure 8E. Then take the last three groups of two and combine them into three quarter notes and you have figure 8F. Now take the two groups of three and combine them into two dotted quarter notes. This will give us figure 8G.

Finally, go back to figure 8A. Instead of breaking the quarter notes down into eighth notes, this time we'll break them down into sixteenth notes to get figure 8H. Figure 8I gives us a different twist by grouping the sixteenth notes into four groups of three and three groups of four. If we combine them all together into their largest common denominator, we have figure 8J.

Practice tapping all of these exercises from 8A down to 8J with your hands while tapping 8A with your foot. This will give you different ideas to play over 6/4. Don't forget about the accent markings. These are very important to accent each grouping. Do 8D, 8E, or 8F sound familiar? If you've ever seen "West Side Story," they should. Remember, practice these slowly at first, and when you feel comfortable with them, move on to the ideas.

Fig. 8: 6/4 Examples



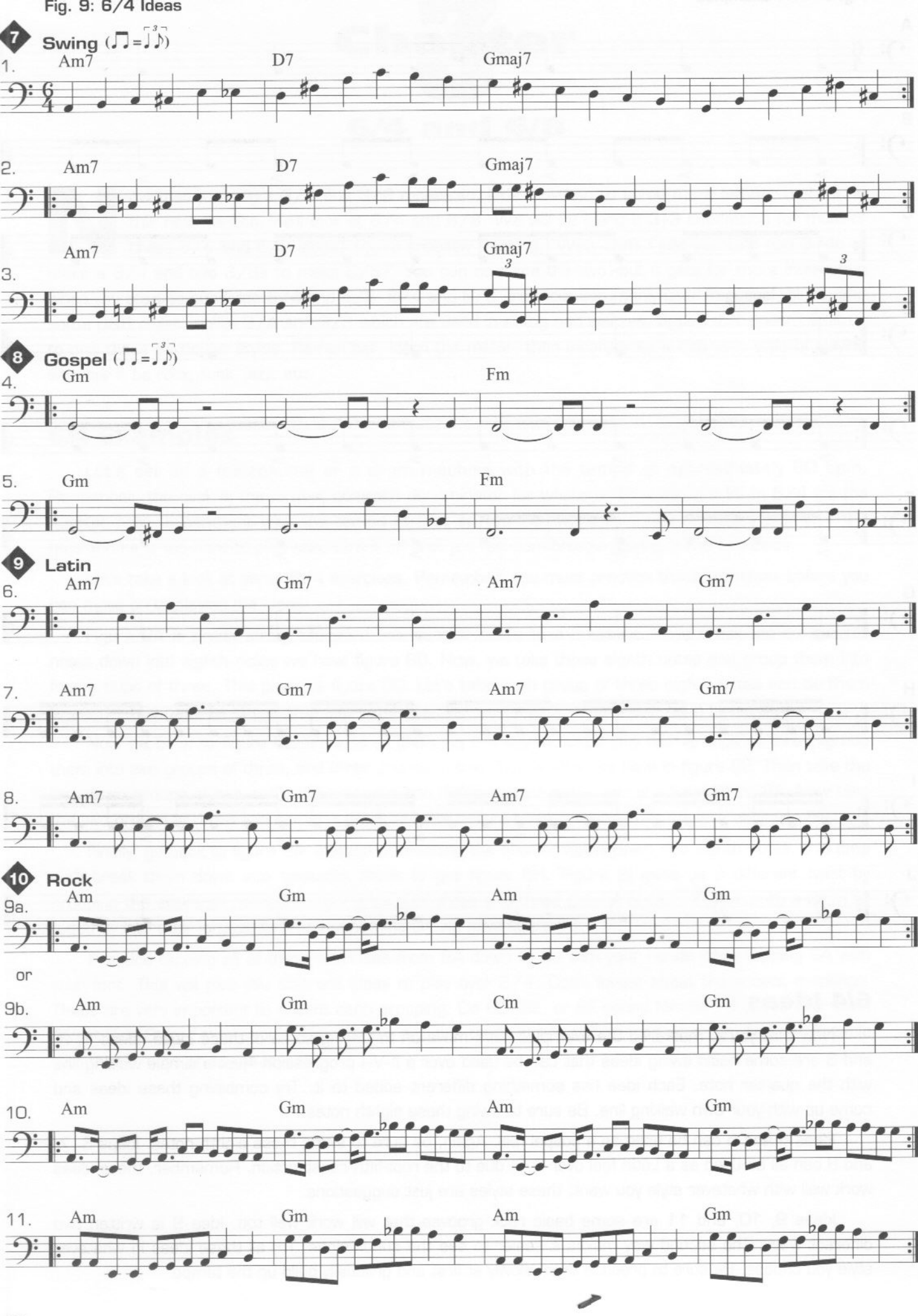
6/4 Ideas

Now that you've mastered the examples, let's move on to playing some of these ideas. Ideas 1, 2, and 3 are some basic swing ideas that can be used over a II–V–I progression—just a simple walking line with the quarter note. Each idea has something different added to it. Try combining these ideas and come up with your own walking line. Be sure to swing those eighth notes.

Ideas 4 and 5 can be used as a gospel feel. Again, be sure to swing those eighth notes. Ideas 6, 7, and 8 can all be used as a Latin feel over 6/4 due to the root-fifth construction. Remember, these ideas work well with whatever style you want; these styles are just suggestions.

Ideas 9, 10, and 11 are some basic rock grooves that will work well too. Idea 9 is written two different ways. The second way makes it easier to see the subdivisions. Try all these ideas in whatever style you choose. Be sure to practice them slowly at first and gradually build up the tempo.

Fig. 9: 6/4 Ideas



6/8 Examples

Let's move on to 6/8. Like 3/4 and 3/8, there will be some similarities between 6/8 and 6/4. You will also see a lot of similarities between 6/8 and 3/4. Remember, 3/4 has six eighth notes to a measure too. But the overall "feel" of the two meters are completely different.

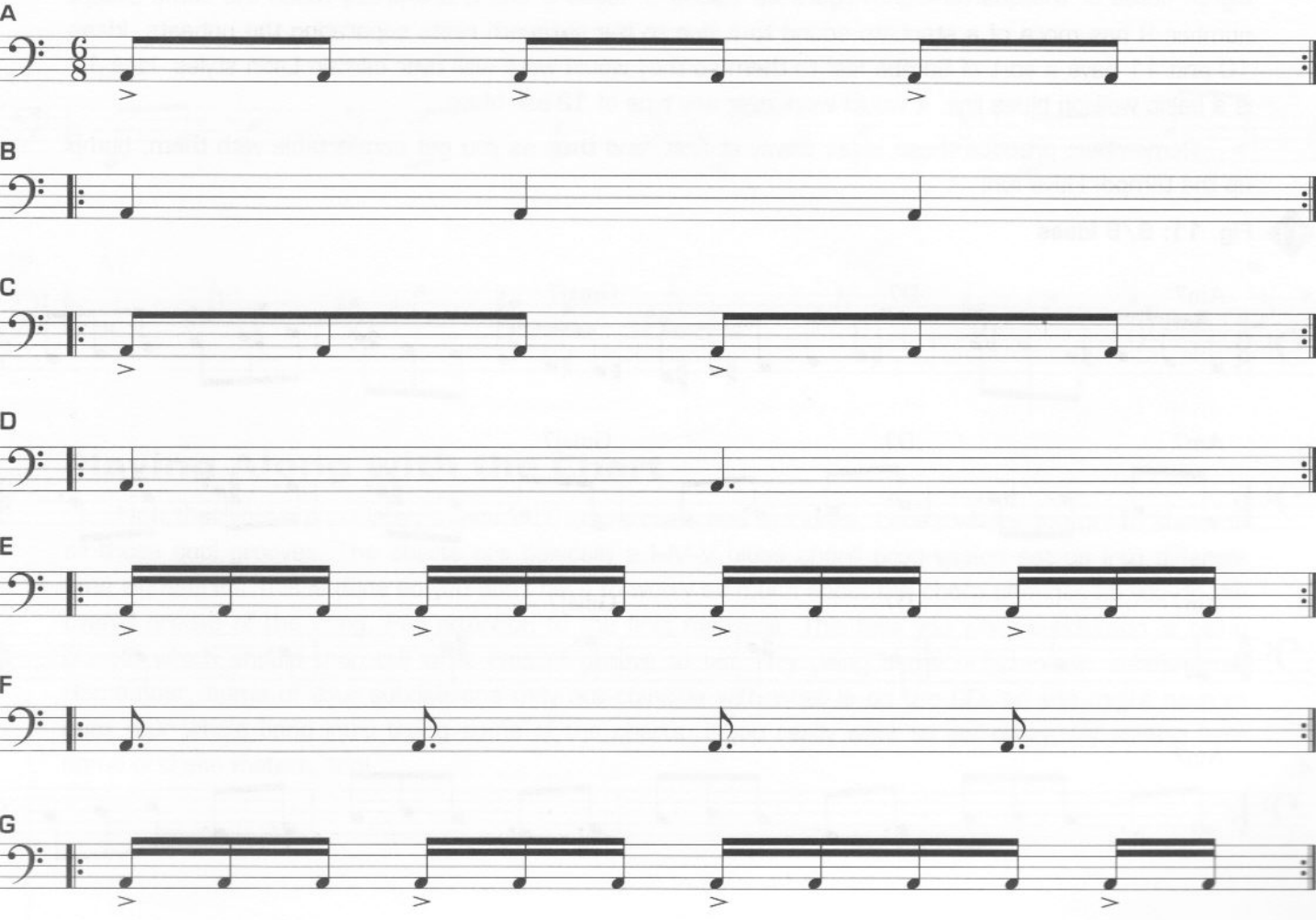
Look at figure 10A. Again, very straight-forward—six eighth notes to a measure. If you combine the eighth notes together, you get figure 10B, which is a measure of 3/4. Here is where the similarities end. Take the eighth note in figure 10A and group them into two groups of three like in figure 10C. If we take those eighth notes and tie them into dotted quarter notes, we have figure 10D which is a two-over-six polyrhythm.

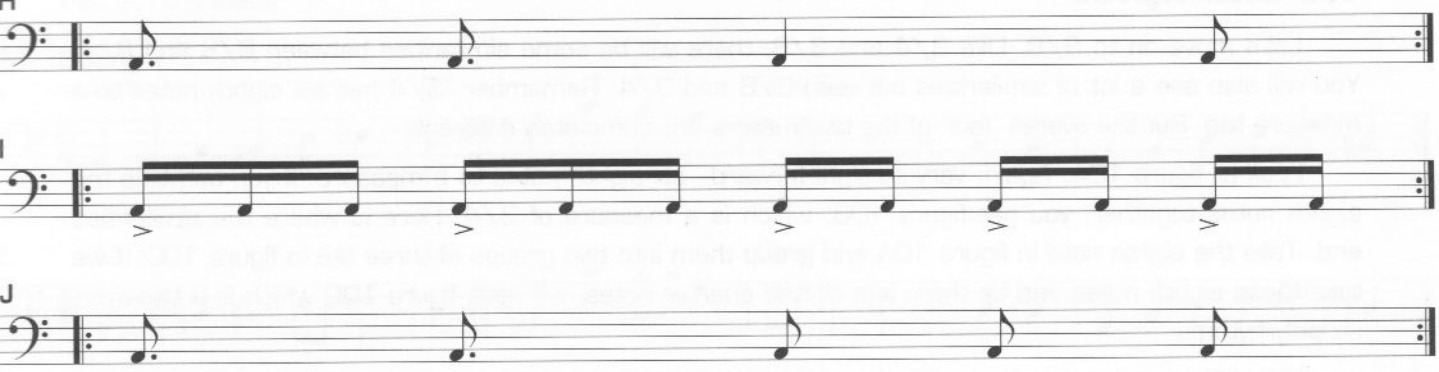
Now let's move on to sixteenth notes. If we break the six eighth notes down into sixteenth notes, that will give us twelve sixteenth notes. Group the sixteenth notes into four groups of three and we have figure 10E. Figure 10F shows us what we would come up with by combining each group of three sixteenth notes together—four dotted eighth notes over six beats (four-over-six). It sounds complicated, but if you look closely, it's really just two over three done twice within the measure.

Now let's group the sixteenth notes into two groups of three, a group of four, and then a group of two (figure 10G). Combine each group into its largest common denominator and we have figure 10H. Look at figure 10I. It is basically just like figure 10G except for the accents on the last three groups of sixteenth notes. Just adding one more subdivision changes the whole feel at the end of the measure. Figure 10J is what we come up with by combining each group into its largest common denominator. Figures 10H and 10J give us that two-over-three feel in the first half of the measure.

Be sure to practice tapping all these figures from 10A down to 10J while tapping 10A with your foot. Start off slowly and then bump the tempo up when you get comfortable with them. If you feel real daring, try tapping these figures while tapping 10B, and then 10D with you foot. Good luck!

Fig. 10: 6/8 Examples





6/8 Ideas

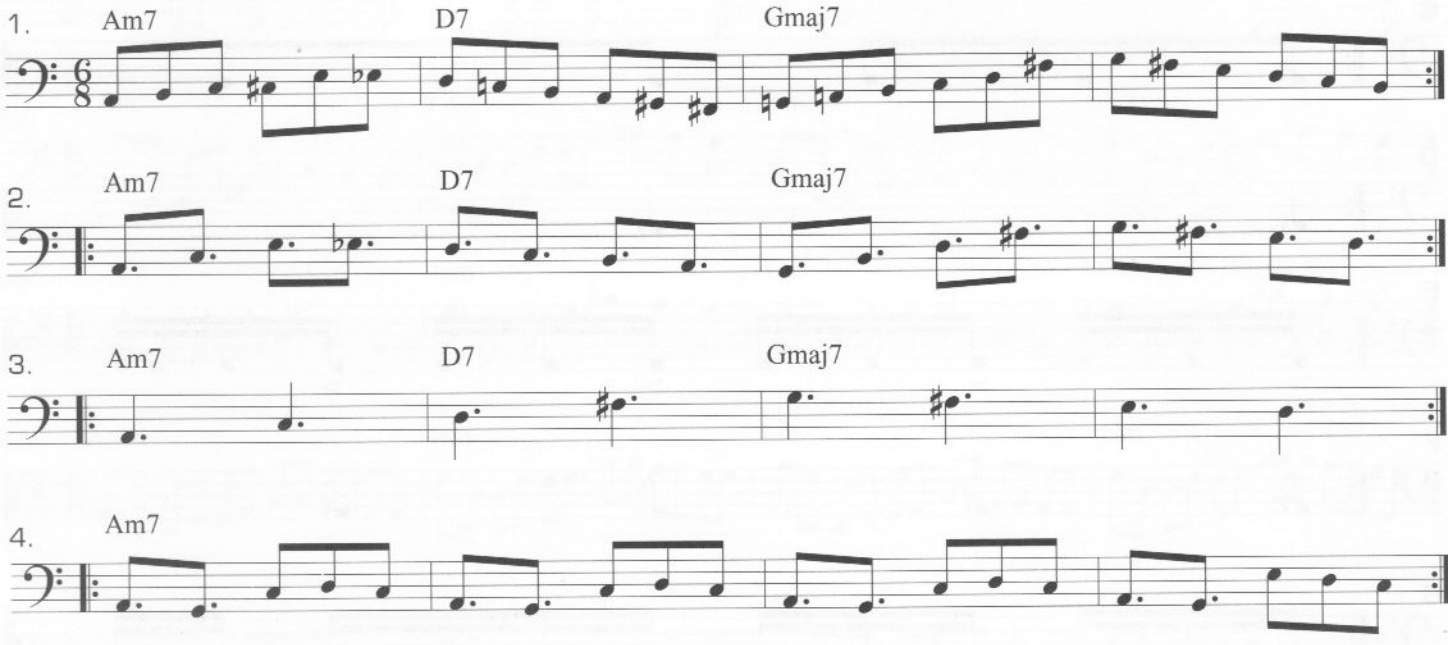
Okay, now that you have the 6/8 examples under your hands, let's move on to the ideas. Most of these ideas are based on the examples. The ones that aren't based on the examples are based on the sixteenth note, so if you did your homework, you won't have any problems with them.

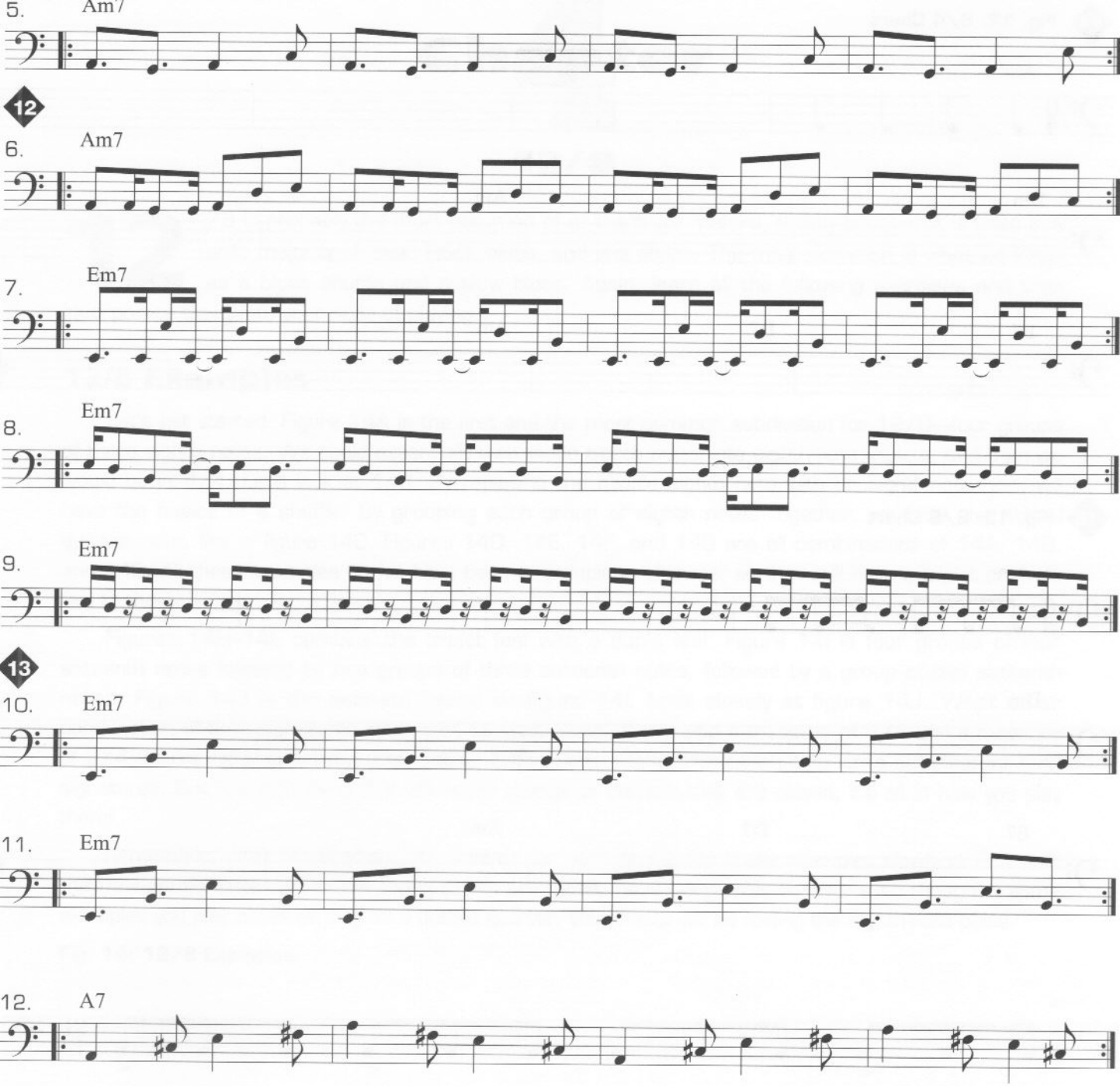
The first three ideas are just a few ways to play a walking line over 6/8. Idea 1 is just a simple eighth-note walking line over a II–V–I chord progression. Idea 2 gives us a two-over-three walking line with the same chord progression. This works well as a turnaround at the end of a phrase. Idea 3 will give you a two feel over the same progression. Try doing these ideas over any chord progression. If you're out of ideas, open up a real book and try them over your favorite standards.

Ideas 4–9 can work with most styles. They were primarily done as either a rock or a funk style but will work over anything. Try playing them over different progressions—I think you'll be surprised. Ideas 4 and 5 start each measure with the two-over-three feel and then complete the measure with either three eighth notes or the quarter-eighth figure as in idea 5. Ideas 8 and 9 are pretty much the same except number 9 has more of a staccato sound to it due to the sixteenth rests separating the upbeats. Ideas 10 and 11 have a sort of Samba feel to them so they would work well over certain Latin styles. Idea 12 is a basic walking blues line. It would work over any type of 12-bar blues.

Remember: practice these ideas slowly at first, and then as you get comfortable with them, bump up the tempo. Have fun!

11 **Fig. 11: 6/8 Ideas**

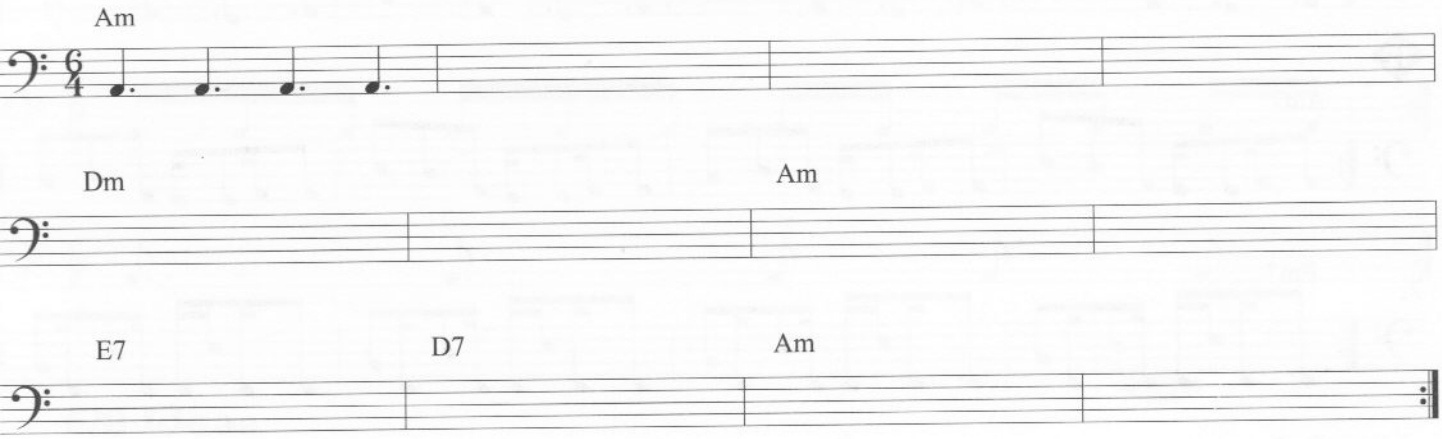




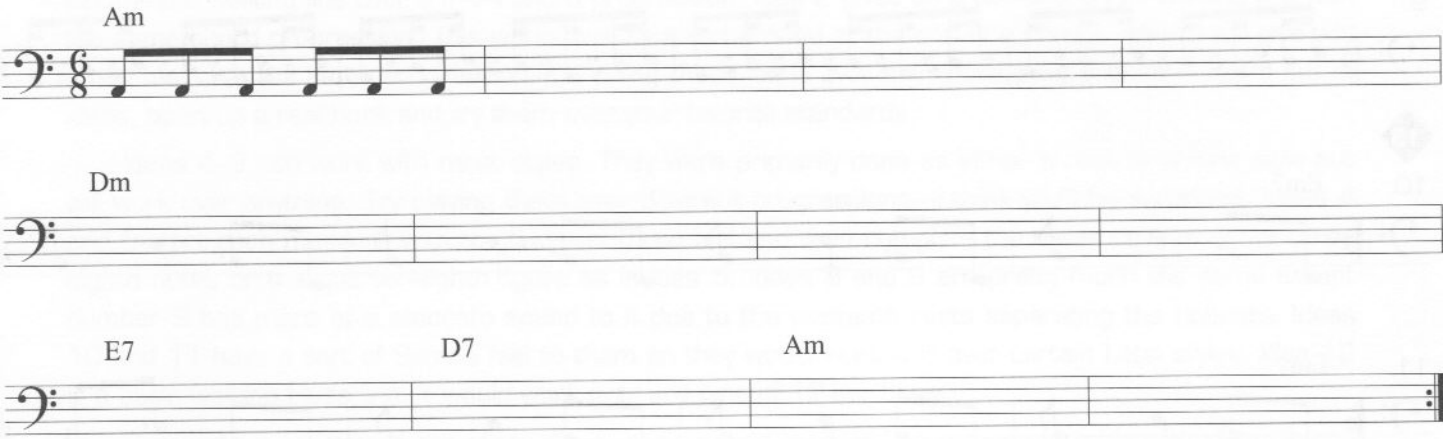
Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as you do the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember, some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band intro trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters, too!

14 Fig. 12: 6/4 Chart



15 Fig. 13: 6/8 Chart



Chapter 4

12/8

12/8 is probably the most common of all the triple meters, mainly because it is used in a wide majority of rock, R&B, blues, and jazz styles. The most common is what we know as a blues shuffle and a slow blues. Again, learn all the following exercises and then incorporate them into your style of playing.

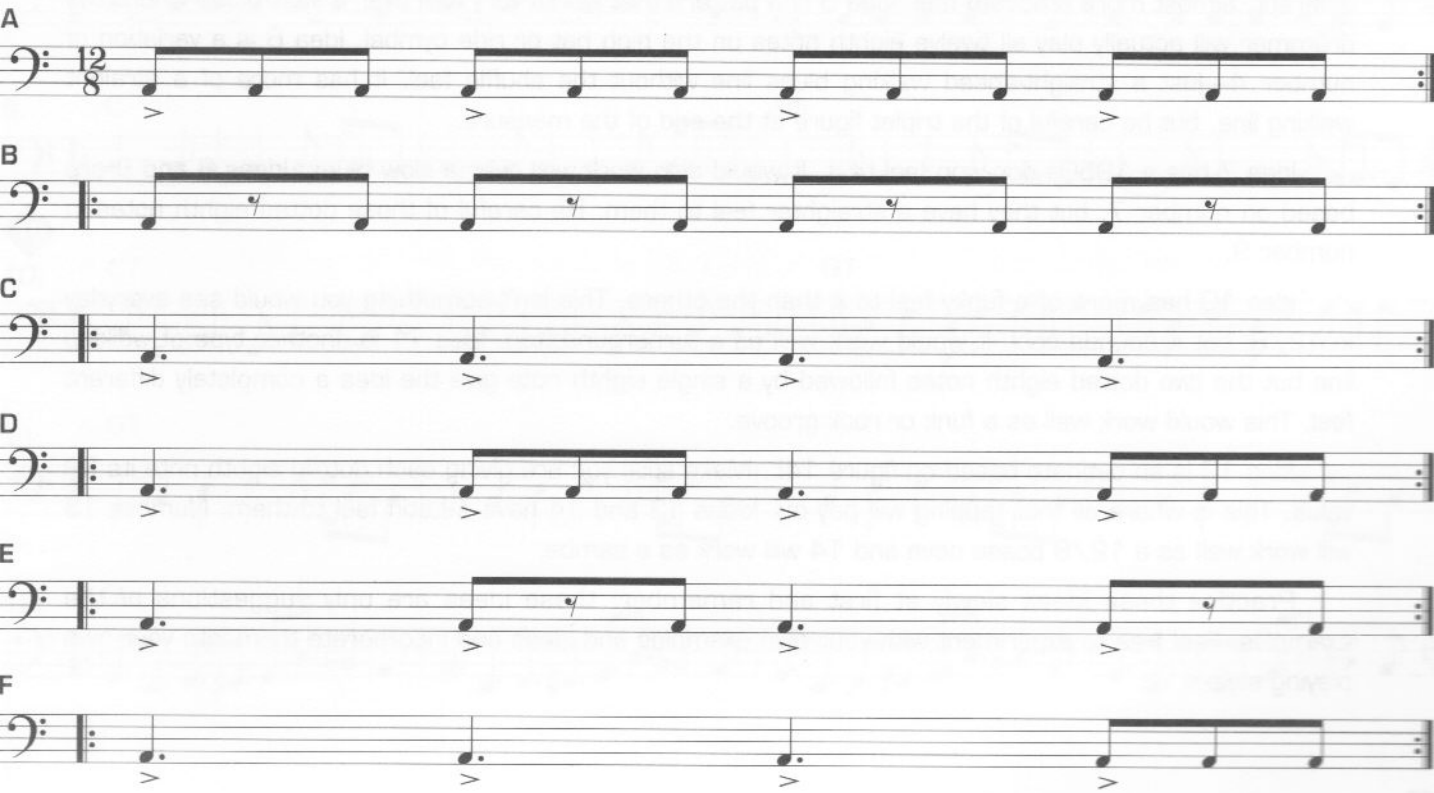
12/8 Examples

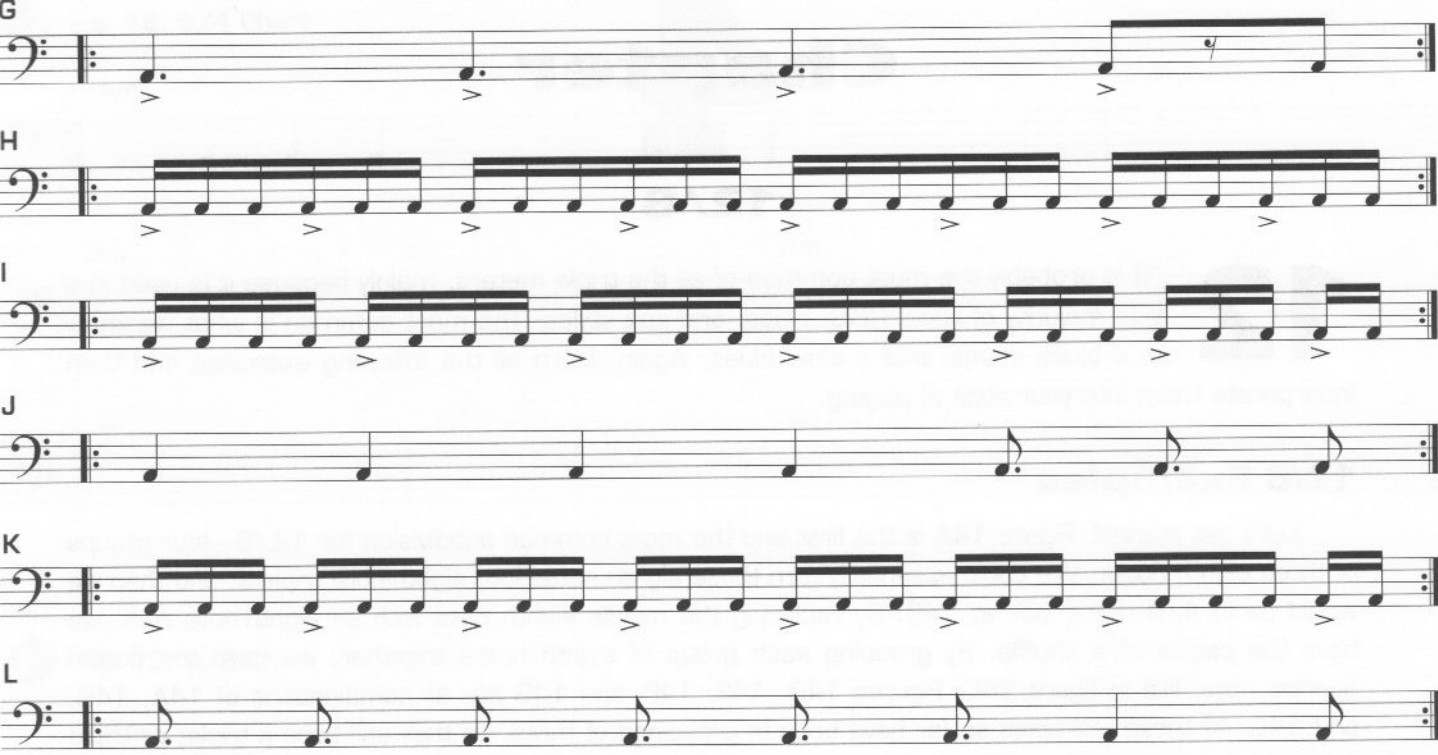
Let's get started. Figure 14A is the first and the most common subdivision for 12/8—four groups of three eighth notes. We could essentially turn those eighth notes into eighth-note triplets, and then we would be in 4/4. Let's look at 14B. By replacing the middle eighth note with an eighth-note rest, we have the basics of a shuffle. By grouping each group of eighth notes together, we have the dotted quarter note, like in figure 14C. Figures 14D, 14E, 14F, and 14G are all combinations of 14A, 14B, and 14C. All these examples so far have been in groupings of three, so they still have a triplet or triple feel to them.

Figures 14H–14L combine the triplet feel with a duple feel. Figure 14I is four groups of four sixteenth notes followed by two groups of three sixteenth notes, followed by a group of two sixteenth notes. Figure 14J is the ostinato based on figure 14I. Look closely at figure 14J. What other combination of time signatures could that be considered? If you said a measure of 4/4 and a measure of 2/4, you're right. One thing you'll notice is there are a few different ways to write out different time signatures. But, the one thing that will never change is the way they are played; it's all in how you play them!

Remember: don't forget about the accents for each group. Do these examples slowly at first until they feel comfortable. We're not trying to win any races. Here's a pointer for you: even though in some examples you play notes as long as a dotted quarter, you should still be feeling the eighth-note pulse.

Fig. 14: 12/8 Examples





12/8 Ideas

Let's move on to some 12/8 ideas. You will notice some pretty common 12/8 ideas here along with some not so common—but nonetheless easy—12/8 ideas. Ideas 1–6 are pretty straight-ahead blues ideas. If you plan on sitting in on a jam session any time, these are a few ideas that might help you on a blues gig.

Idea 1 is a basic shuffle pattern (root, octave, m7, P5). Idea 2 is the same pattern, but notice the eighth rests in the middle of each group of three. Pay attention to those rests—they give the idea a whole new feel. Try alternating between ideas 1 and 2.

Ideas 4 and 5 are the same way. They are identical patterns, but the rests give number 5 a different, almost more staccato feel. Idea 3 is a pattern that works very well over a slow blues where the drummer will actually play all twelve eighth notes on the high hat or ride cymbal. Idea 6 is a variation of number 4—just a straight-ahead walking blues line without the shuffle feel. It has more of a straight walking line, but be careful of the triplet figure at the end of the measure.

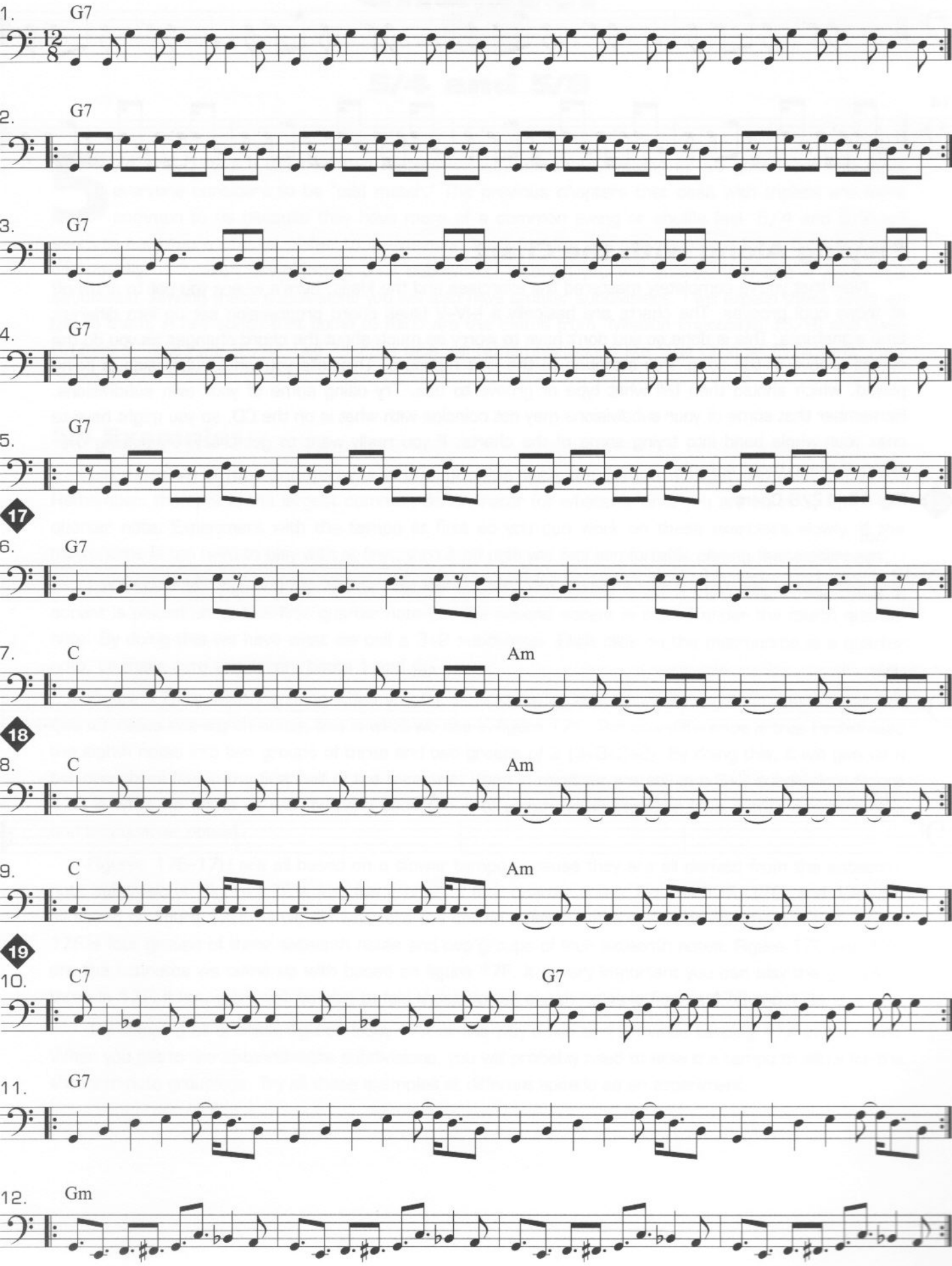
Idea 7 has a 1950s doo-wop feel to it. It would also work well over a slow blues. Ideas 8 and 9 are based on number 7, but they have a straighter feel to them. Be careful of those dotted eighth notes in number 9.

Idea 10 has more of a funky feel to it than the others. This isn't something you would see everyday in 12/8, but it sounds cool. It would work well as a turnaround, too. Idea 11 is another type of walking line but the two dotted eighth notes followed by a single eighth note give the idea a completely different feel. This would work well as a funk or rock groove.

Idea 12 is an ostinato based on figure 14L. Make sure you are giving each dotted eighth note its full value. This is where all that tapping will pay off. Ideas 13 and 14 have a Latin feel to them. Number 13 will work well as a 12/8 bossa nova and 14 will work as a samba.

Practice these ideas slowly at first and remember: these ideas are only suggestions of the examples. Feel free to experiment with your own examples and ideas and incorporate them into your own playing style.

16 Fig. 15: 12/8 Ideas



20

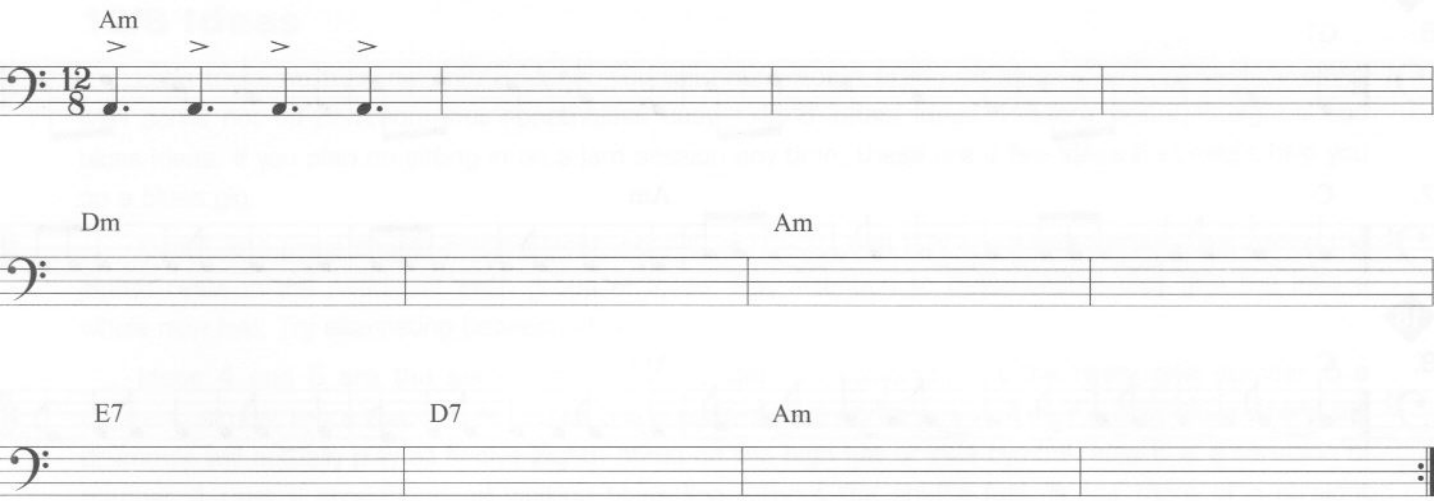
13.

14.

Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as you do the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember that some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band into trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters, too!

21 **Fig. 16: 12/8 Chart**



Chapter 5

5/4 and 5/8

5/4 and 5/8 are the next two meters we will talk about. Playing in five gets more into what everyone considers to be "odd meter." The previous chapters that dealt with triplets are more common to us because they have more of a common swing or shuffle feel. 5/4 and 5/8 will seem to have more of a "skip" feel to it—meaning it will feel like you are skipping a beat. 5/4 and 5/8 will usually be broken down into a 3+2 subdivision, though you will occasionally see it as a 2+3 subdivision. Among these subdivisions you will also have smaller subdivisions. I will explain these when we get to them. A few songs that come to mind are the theme from "Mission Impossible" (5/8) and Dave Brubeck's "Take Five" (5/4). Led Zeppelin fans will remember songs like "The Crunge" (5/4) and "Four Sticks" (5/8).

5/4 Examples

Let's set up a metronome or a drum machine with the tempo at approximately 80 bpm. Remember: the click is the largest common denominator for whatever time you are in; in 5/4, it's the quarter note. Experiment with the tempo at first so you can work on these exercises slowly. If the metronome is too hard to play with at first, turn it off until you feel comfortable playing these exercises.

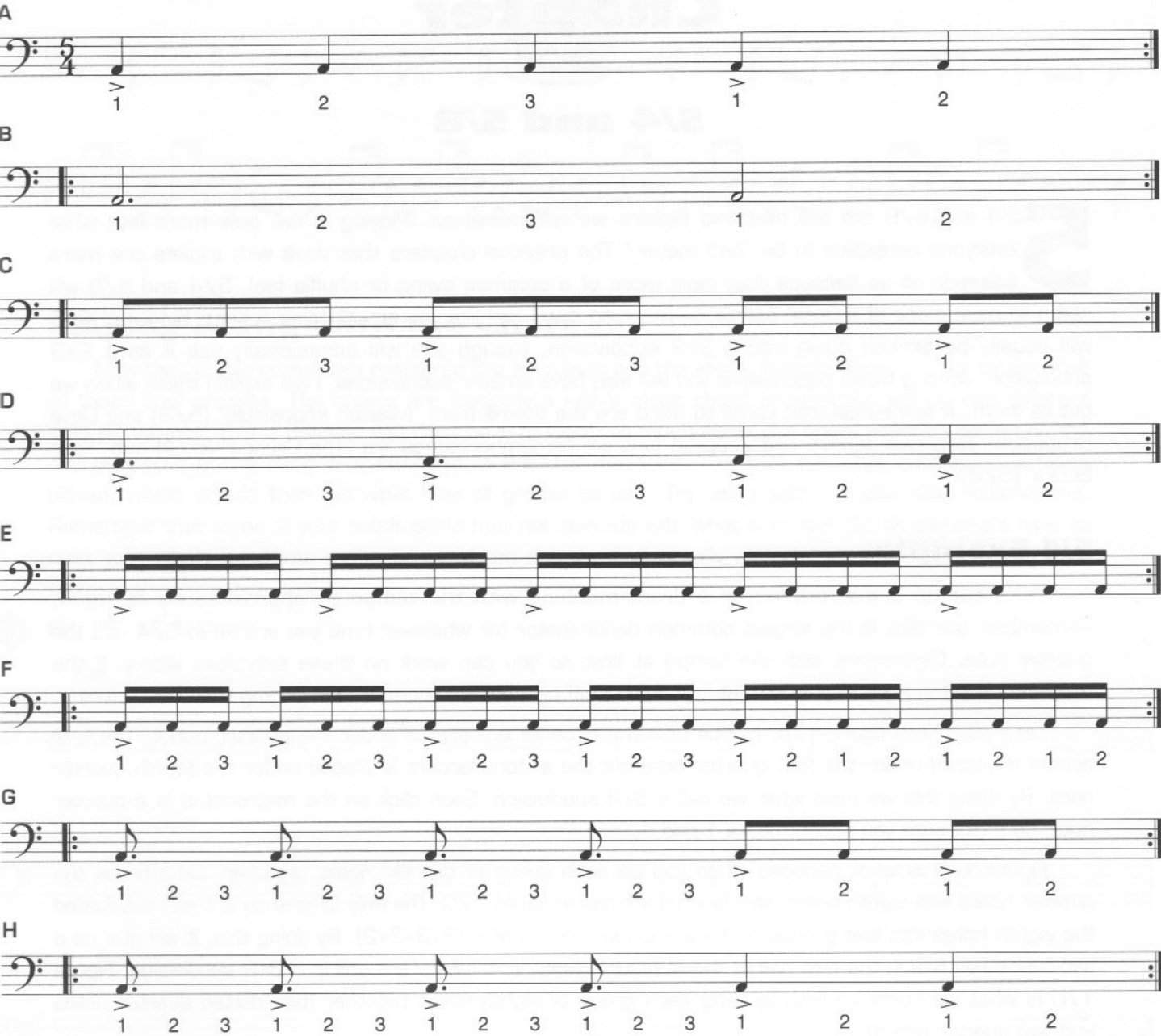
Let's start with figure 17A. Notice how the accents are placed under the quarter notes. The first accent is placed under the first quarter note but the second accent is placed under the fourth quarter note. By doing this we have what we call a 3+2 subdivision. Each click on the metronome is a quarter note, so make sure you accent beats 1 and 4.

Figure 17B is what happens when you tie each group of quarter notes together. Let's break the quarter notes into eighth notes; this is what we see in figure 17C. The only difference is that I subdivided the eighth notes into two groups of three and two groups of 2 (3+3+2+2). By doing this, it will give us a two-over-three feel in the first half of the measure. Keep in mind we are still in a 3+2 subdivision. Figure 17D is what we come up with by tying each group of eighth notes together (two dotted quarter notes and two quarter notes).

Figures 17E–17H are all based on a slower tempo because they are all derived from the sixteenth-note subdivisions. Figure 17E is just five groups of four quarter notes. Figures 17F, 17G, and 17H are all based on figure 17D. All we did was take the dotted quarter notes and subdivide them in half. Figure 17F is four groups of three sixteenth notes and two groups of four sixteenth notes. Figure 17G and 17H are the ostinatos we come up with based on figure 17F. It is very important you can play the groups of three in 17F. If not, you won't be able to feel those dotted eighth notes in figures 17G and 17H.

Try clapping all of these figures from 17A all the way down to 17H while keeping 17A in your foot. When you get to the sixteenth-note subdivisions, you will probably need to slow the tempo to allow for the sixteenth-note groupings. Try all these examples at different speeds as an experiment.

Fig. 17: 5/4 Examples



5/4 Ideas

Okay, let's take a look at some of the following 5/4 ideas. Ideas 1 and 2 are both based on the 3+2 eighth-note subdivision. Idea 1 is similar to the bass line from Dave Brubeck's "Take 5"; idea 2 is similar to the bass line from "Mission Impossible" and is another example of playing two-over-three in the group-of-three subdivision.

Idea 3 is a bit different, the subdivision alternates between measures. The first measure has a 3+2 subdivision, while the second measure has a 2+3 subdivision. Idea 4 is a funk line with a 3+2 subdivision. It's hard to tell, but the two groups of eighth notes at the end of the measure are the giveaway. Remember, some subdivisions aren't as blatant as others!

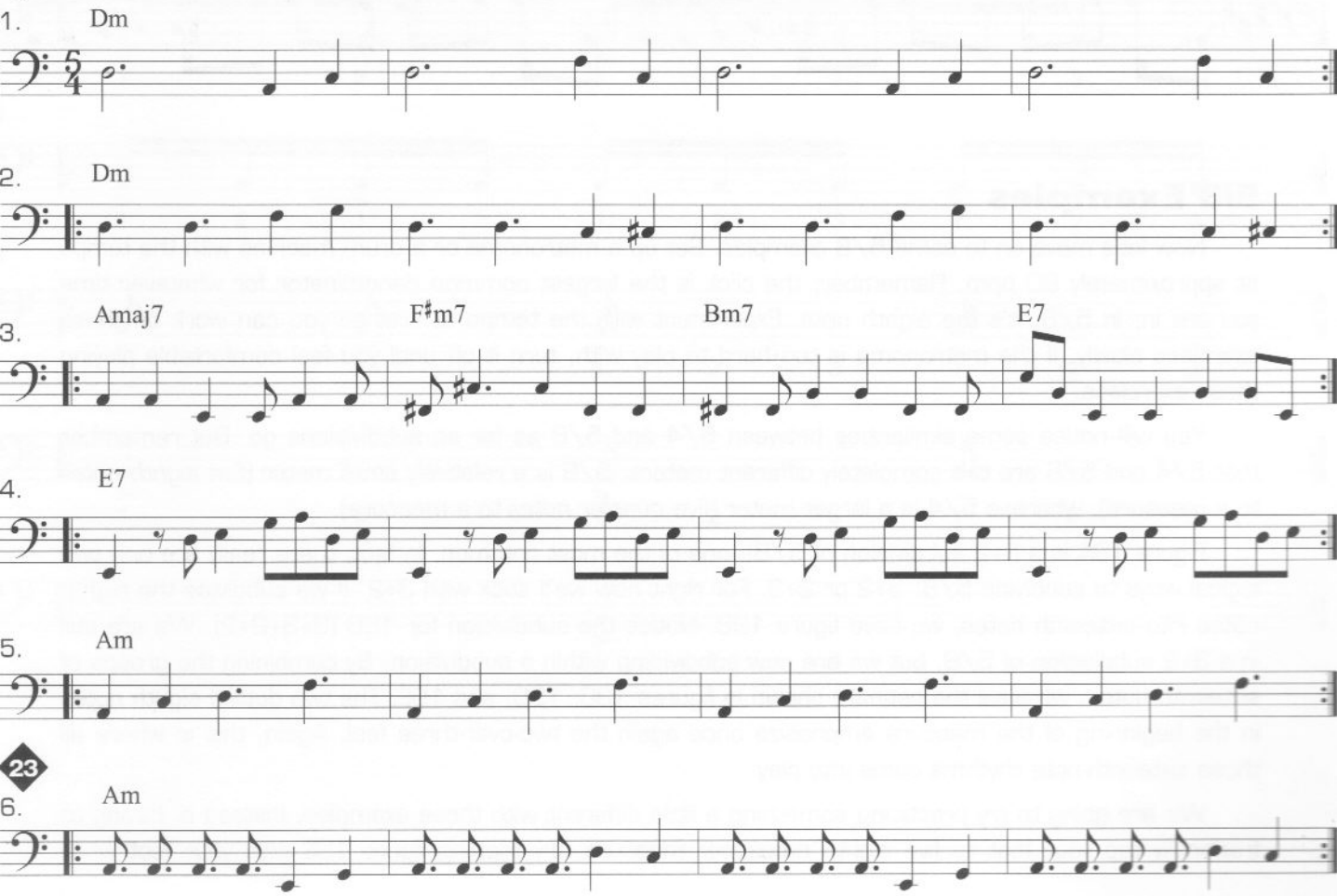
Any Led Zeppelin fans? Idea 5 should sound familiar. It's based off of a 2+3 subdivision. Ideas 6, 7, 8, and 9 are all based on the sixteenth note. This means you might want to slow the metronome down to a reasonable tempo. If you've already worked on the 5/8 examples, then these dotted eighth notes should come fairly easily. If not, then you're really only guessing where each dotted eighth note falls. It is very important you give each dotted eighth note its full value. Ideas 8 and 9 are virtually identical—number 9 is just a little more syncopated.

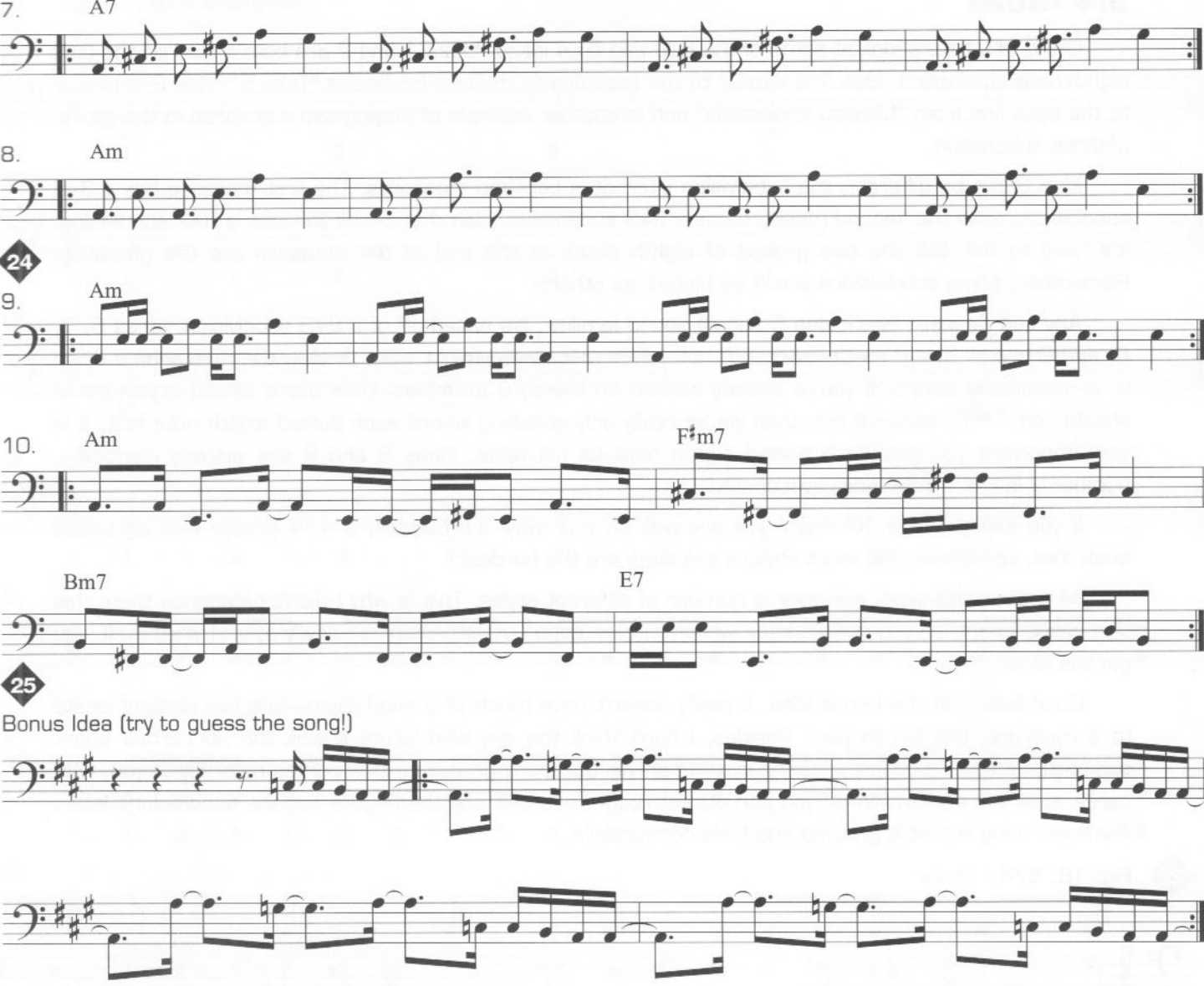
If you can get idea 10 down, you are well on your way. It's basically a 4/4 groove with an added beat. Yes, sometimes the most obvious solutions are the hardest.

All these ideas work well over a number of different styles. This is why I didn't categorize them this time. Experiment for yourself and see what you can come up with. Start off slowly at first and...well, you get the idea!

Good luck with the bonus idea. It really doesn't have much of a subdivision—just five straight beats to a measure, but fun to play. Besides, I don't think the guy who wrote it was too concerned about subdivisions. Like I said in the very beginning of this book, if a groove or idea comes naturally to you, who cares what the subdivision is; you can always record yourself and then figure out the subdivisions later. The main thing is that it grooves and feels comfortable.

22 **Fig. 18: 5/4/ Ideas**





5/8 Examples

Now let's move on to some 5/8 examples. Set up a metronome or a drum machine with the tempo at approximately 80 bpm. Remember: the click is the largest common denominator for whatever time you are in; in 5/8, it's the eighth note. Experiment with the tempo at first so you can work on these exercises slowly. If the metronome is too hard to play with, turn it off until you feel comfortable playing these exercises.

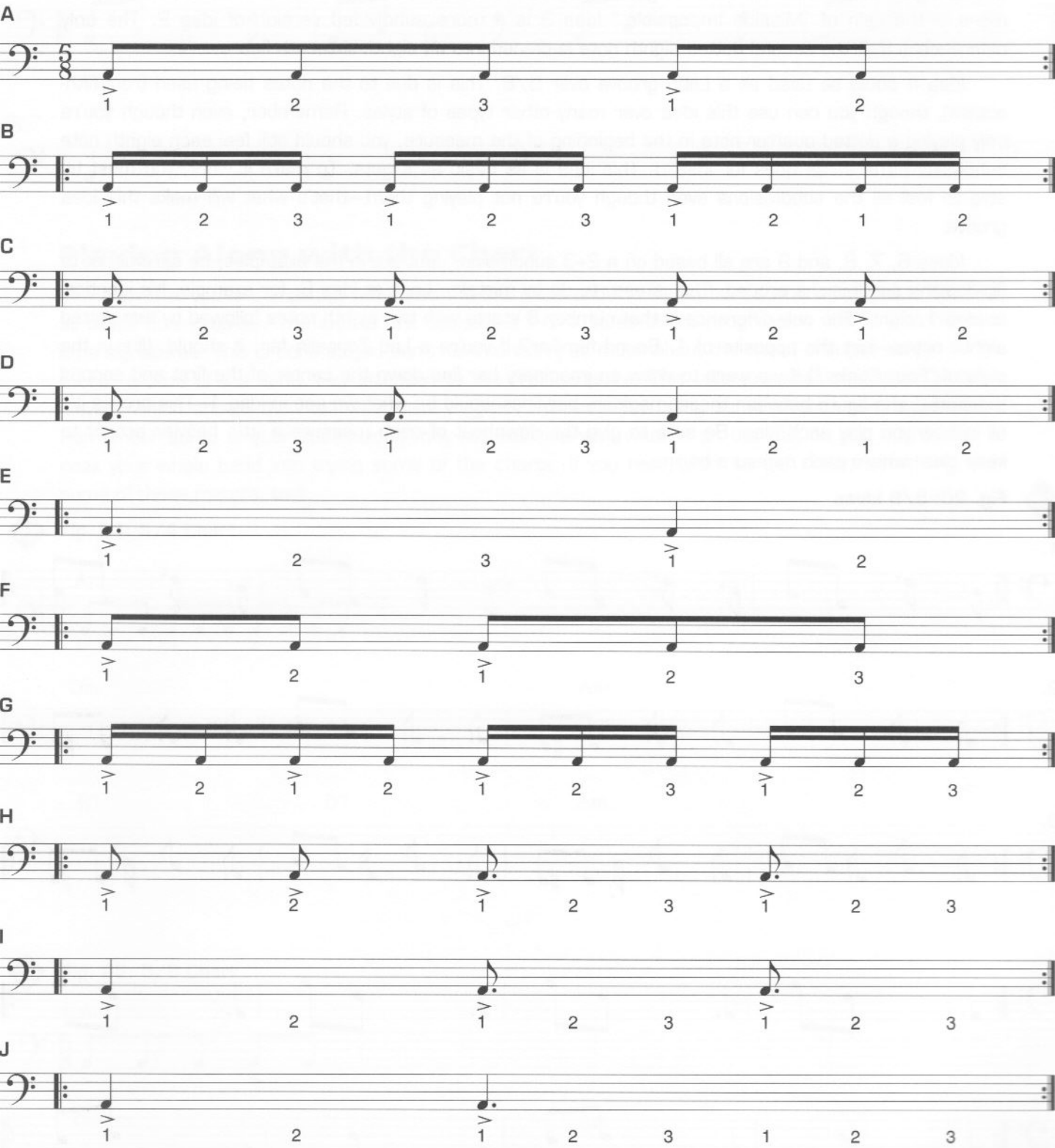
You will notice some similarities between 5/4 and 5/8 as far as subdivisions go. But remember that 5/4 and 5/8 are two completely different meters. 5/8 is a relatively small meter (five *eighth notes* to a measure), whereas 5/4 is a larger meter (five *quarter notes* to a measure).

Figure 19A is a 3+2 subdivision of 5/8—one of the most common. In fact, there really are only two logical ways to subdivide 5/8: 3+2 or 2+3. For right now we'll stick with 3+2. If we subdivide the eighth notes into sixteenth notes, we have figure 19B. Notice the subdivision for 19B (3+3+2+2). We are still in a 3+2 subdivision of 5/8, but we are now subdividing within a subdivision. By combining the groups of sixteenth notes, we have the ostinato shown in figures 19C, 19D, and 19E. The two dotted eighth notes in the beginning of the measure emphasize once again the two-over-three feel. Again, this is where all those sixteenth-note rhythms come into play.

We are going to try practicing something a little different with these examples. Instead of having to frantically tap your foot to five eighth notes per measure, try tapping figure 19E with your foot while

tapping 19A–19E with your hands. When you get to figure 19F notice the subdivisions are flipped around. We are now in a 2+3 subdivision. All the examples are the same except they are flip-flopped. Practice tapping figures 19F–19J with your hands while tapping 19J with your foot. Don't forget about all those accents. One thing to beware of: be sure to give the downbeat of each measure a little heavier accent. Sometimes the subdivision can get flipped from 3+2 to 2+3 without you even noticing it.

Fig. 19: 5/8 Examples



5/8 Ideas

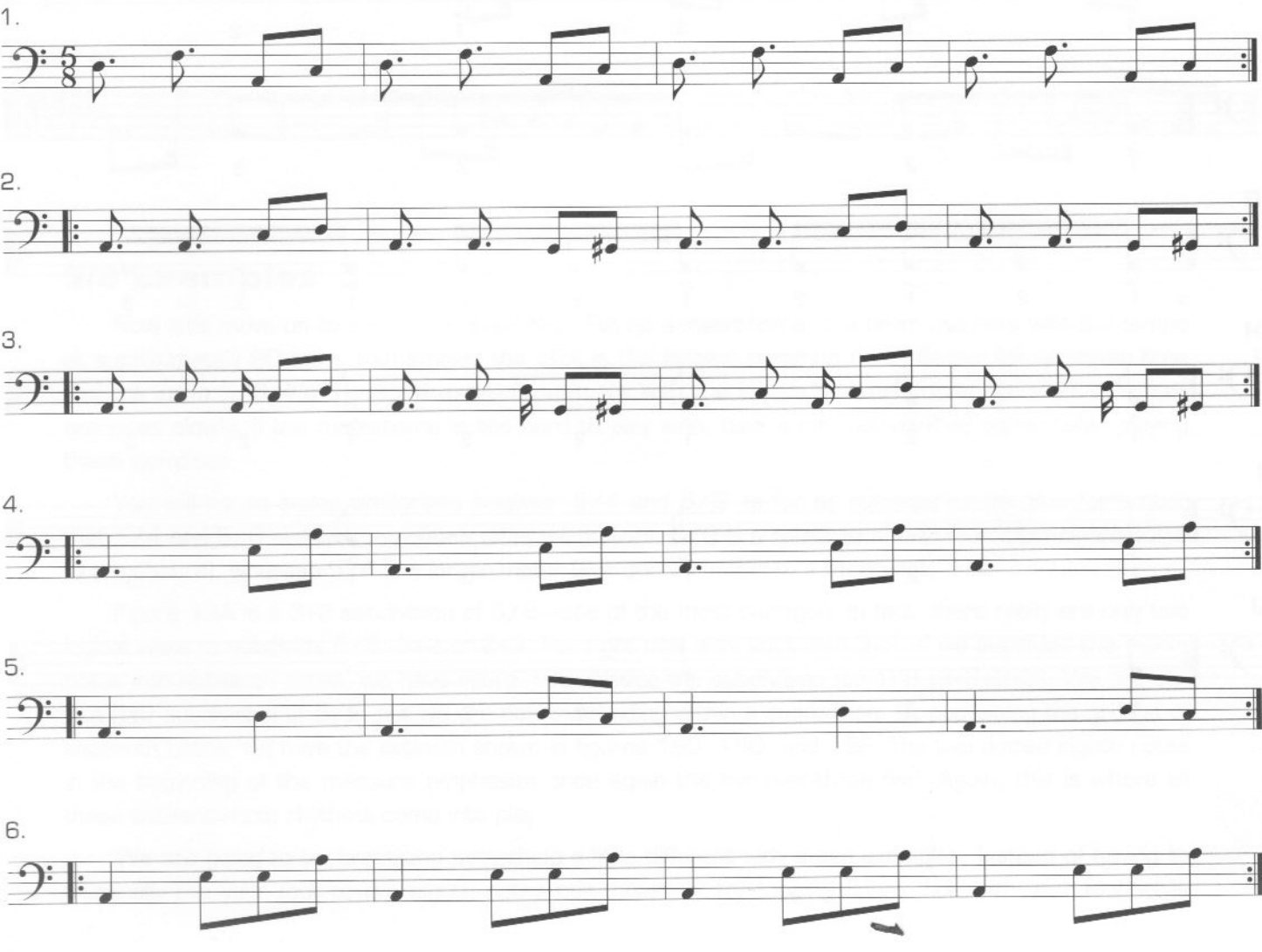
Now that we have looked at two of the more common subdivisions of 5/8, let's move on to the ideas. All of these ideas are based on either a 3+2 subdivision or the 2+3 subdivision like we practiced in the examples.

Idea 1 is the basic "two dotted eighth notes followed by two eighth notes." Make sure to give those dotted eighth notes their full value to get the two-over-three feel. Idea 2 is more of the same, only it's more in the vein of "Mission Impossible." Idea 3 is a more subdivided version of idea 2. The only difference is that the second dotted eighth note is divided into an eighth-sixteenth figure.

Idea 4 could be used as a Latin groove over 5/8. This is due to the notes being used (root-fifth-octave), though you can use this idea over many other types of styles. Remember, even though you're only playing a dotted quarter note in the beginning of the measure, you should still feel each eighth note subdivision. The same goes for idea 5. This idea is as basic as it gets. To make it work, you must be able to feel all the subdivisions even though you're not playing them—that's what will make this idea groove.

Ideas 6, 7, 8, and 9 are all based on a 2+3 subdivision. Just like in the examples, be careful not to flip-flop the subdivisions around. This is easy to do by mistake. Look at idea 8, for example. It's identical to idea 1, right? The only difference is that number 8 starts with two eighth notes followed by two dotted eighth notes—just the opposite of 1. Sound familiar? If you're a Led Zeppelin fan, it should. (It's in the style of "Four Sticks.") If we were to draw an imaginary bar line down the center of the first and second measures, the figure between those imaginary bar lines would be what we see in idea 1. This proves it's all in how you play each idea. Be sure to give the downbeat of each measure a little heavier accent to keep clear where each measure begins.

26 **Fig. 20: 5/8 Ideas**



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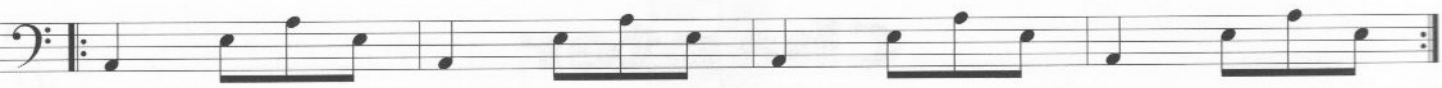

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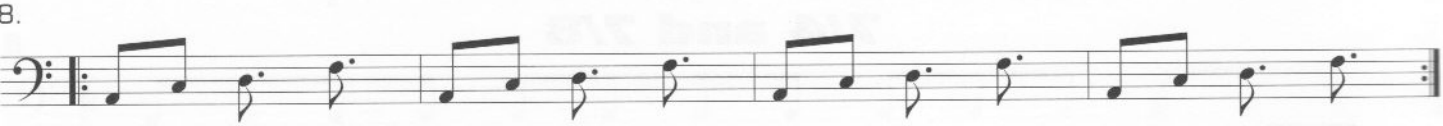

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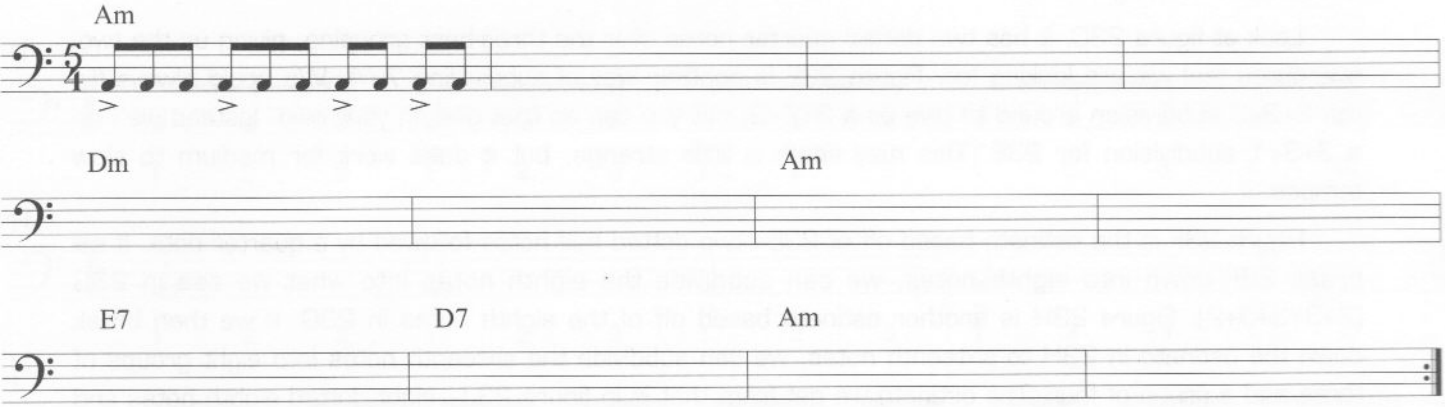
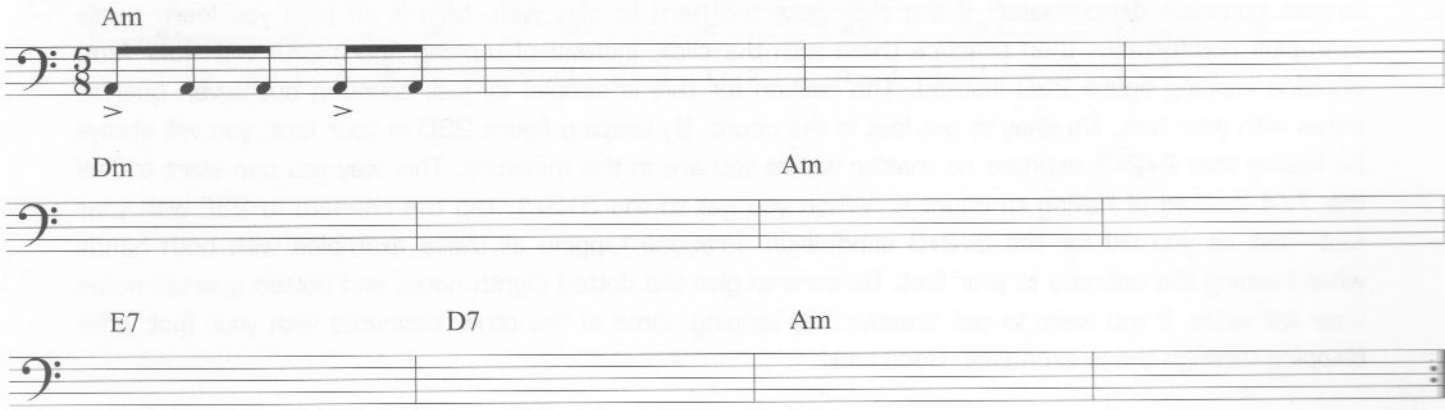
Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as you do the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band into trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters, too!

27 **Fig. 21: 5/4 Chart**



28 **Fig. 22: 5/8 Chart**



Chapter 6

7/4 and 7/8

7/4 and 7/8 are the next two time signatures we will look at. These two meters are effective in many styles; next to playing in five, seven is the second most commonly used odd meter. It is used in quite a number of Greek and Armenian folk tunes as well as some of today's pop tunes. Pink Floyd had a major hit with their tune "Money," which is in 7/4. Yanni refers back to 7/8 quite a bit in his compositions due to his Greek influence. Rush was probably one of the most influential and commercially successful when it came to incorporating odd time signatures in their compositions. They had great success with their hit "Subdivisions," which switches between 4/4 and 7/8. And of course—last but not least—who could forget about Frank Zappa? Zappa would insert odd time measures in his compositions just to change things up every now and again, as well as use them throughout compositions.

7/4 Examples

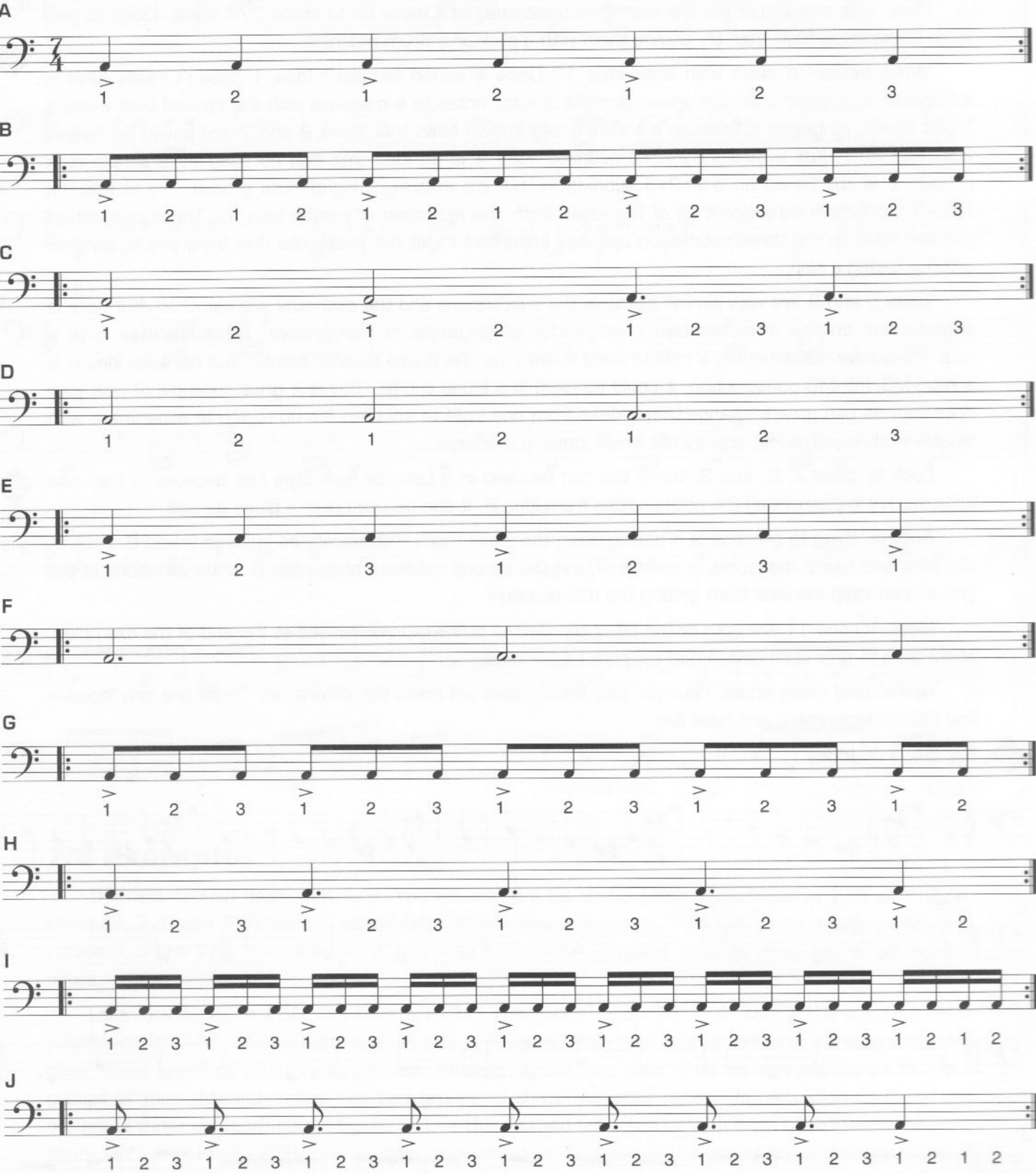
Let's look at some 7/4 examples. Figure 23A is very simple—seven quarter notes to a measure. But look at the subdivisions. This is the most common subdivision for 7/4 and 7/8: 2+2+3. Now if we break the seven quarter notes down into eighth notes, we have figure 23B. We are still in a 2+2+3 subdivision. Figures 23C and 23D are two different ostinatos we can come up with by combining the subdivisions from figure 23B.

Look at figure 23C. It has two dotted quarter notes over the three-beat grouping, giving us the two-over-three feel we are looking for. Figure 23E is another way of subdividing 7/4. We could always flip the 2+2+3 subdivision around to give us a 3+2+2, but you can do that one on your own. Instead we'll do a 3+3+1 subdivision for 23E. This may seem a little strange, but it does work for medium to slow tempos.

Figure 23F is the ostinato based off of 23E—two dotted half notes followed by a quarter note. If we break 23F down into eighth notes, we can subdivide the eighth notes into what we see in 23G (3+3+3+3+2). Figure 23H is another ostinato based off of the eighth notes in 23G. If we then break down the ostinato in 23H to sixteenth notes, we can subdivide the sixteenth notes into eight groups of three and a group of four. The ostinato we get from that is in figure 23J—eight dotted eighth notes and a quarter note (or two eighth notes). This may seem like a lot, but it really isn't if you consider all the other possibilities for 7/4. These are some of the more common subdivisions.

Here's what you need to practice before moving on to the 7/4 ideas. First let's set up a metronome or a drum machine to 80 bpm. The click will be your quarter note. In 7/4, the quarter note is the largest common denominator. If the click gets too hard to play with, turn it off until you learn these examples comfortably; then practice them with the click. Instead of tapping figure 23A with your foot, practice tapping figure 23D instead. The reason for this is simple: by just counting out seven quarter notes with your foot, it's easy to get lost in the count. By keeping figure 23D in your foot, you will always be feeling that 2+2+3 ostinato no matter where you are in the measure. This way you can start to feel the 7/4 instead of having to count it. When you get to the 3+3+1, tap the ostinato in 23F with your foot—just as you did for the 2+2+3 subdivision. Practice tapping all these examples with both hands while keeping the ostinato in your foot. Be sure to give the dotted eighth notes and dotted quarter notes their full value. If you want to get creative, try tapping some of the other ostinatos with your foot while clapping through these examples. Good luck!

Fig. 23: 7/4 Examples



7/4 Ideas

Okay, now that you've got the examples mastered, let's move on to some 7/4 ideas. Don't forget, learn these ideas first, then try playing them with a click or a drum machine.

What better to start with than idea 1? Does it sound familiar? Idea 1 doesn't really have a subdivision to it other than just seven straight quarter notes to a measure with the second beat being a triplet figure. I included it because it's a fairly well known bass line. Ideas 2 and 3 are based on figures 23C and 23D—just a straight 2+2+3 ostinato. Idea 4 is an idea that can be used as a simple rock groove. It is still based on a 2+2+3 subdivision, but it's a straight eighth-note groove. Try to feel the 2+2+3 subdivision throughout all of the ideas (with the exception of maybe idea 1). Those two dotted quarter notes in the three subdivision are very important to let the measures flow from one to another without feeling a skip.

Ideas 5 and 6 are very similar because the subdivisions and the ostinatos are identical—but here is where your choice of notes can change the whole style of the groove. Because idea 5 is a root–P5–octave construction, it can be used in any type of a bossa nova or samba, but because idea 6 is a root–M3–P5–M6 construction, it could be used in a blues shuffle. This is a great example of how your note choices can greatly change these ideas from one style to another. It's up to you to experiment with whatever style you're into and try out these ideas in that style.

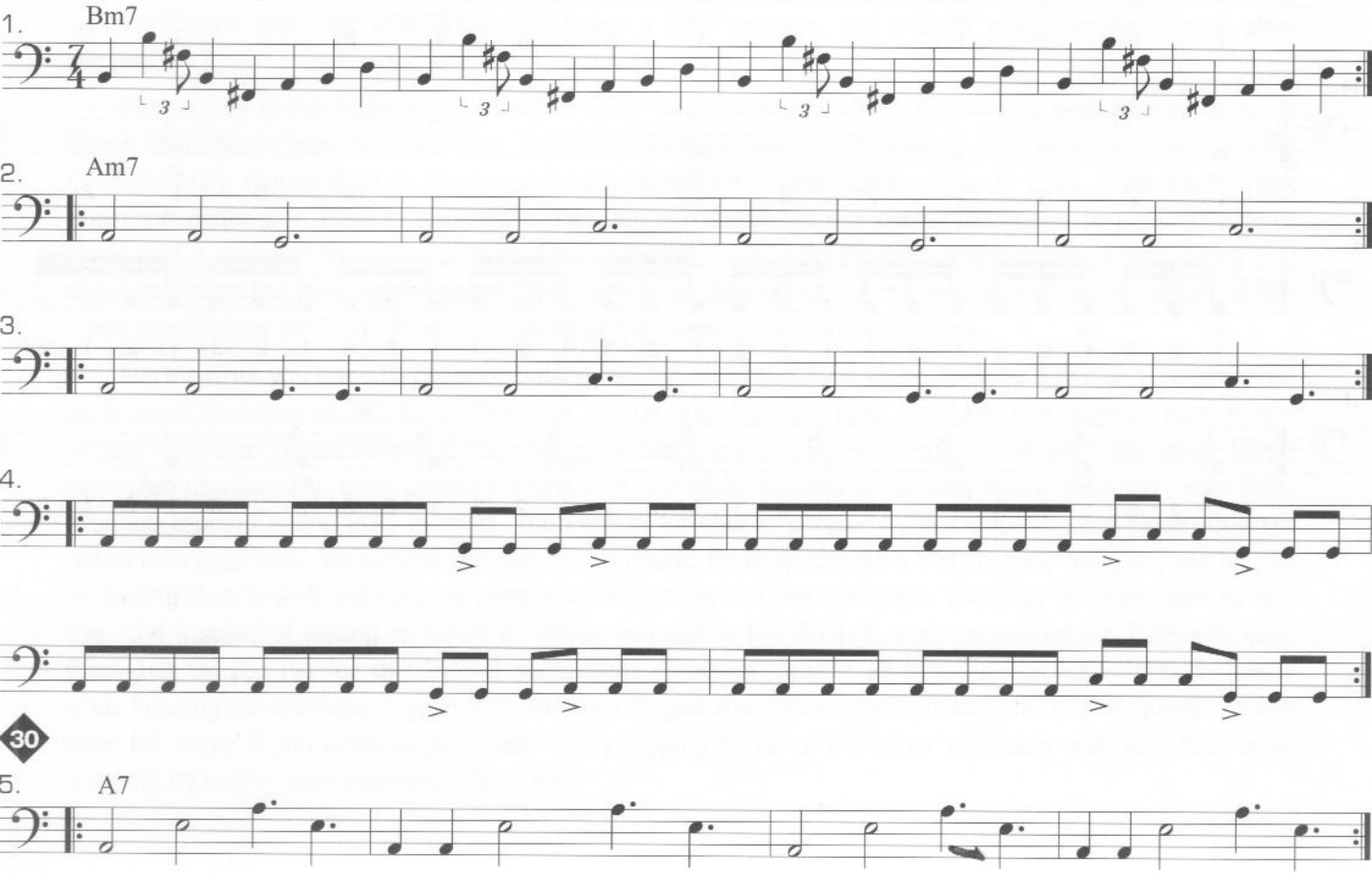
Look at ideas 7, 8, and 9; these too can be used in a Latin or funk style just because of the note choices. Try implementing the note choices from idea 6. It can be used over a blues as well.

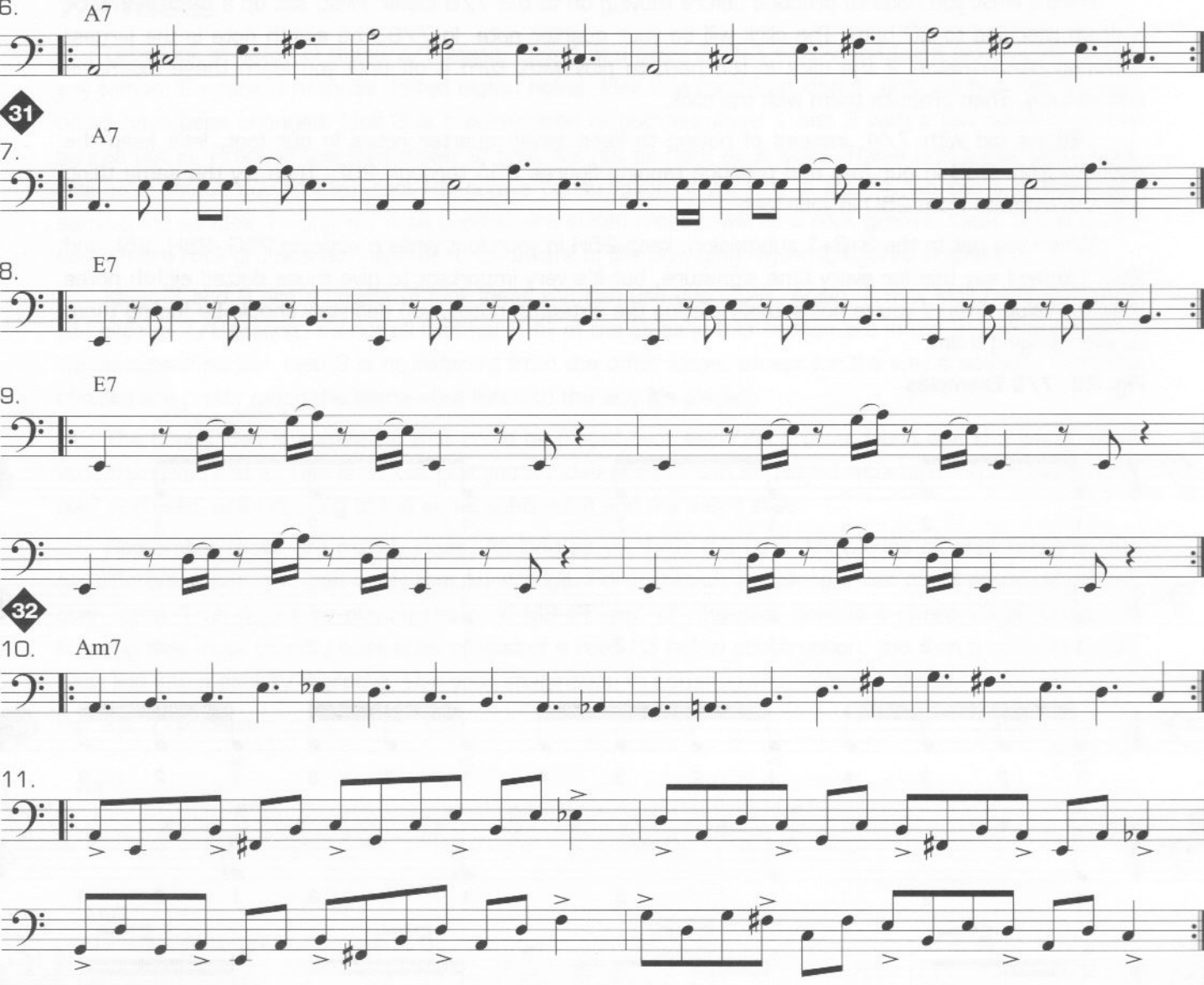
Another thing to practice is breaking down the ideas more rhythmically as in ideas 7 and 8. Look at the third and fourth measures in number 7 and the second measure of number 8. Little variations of the groove can keep the idea from getting too monotonous.

Ideas 10 and 11 are both based off of the 3+3+1 subdivision discussed at the end of the examples. Make sure to give each dotted quarter note its full value.

As I've said many times: How you play these ideas will make the difference. These are only ideas—feel free to experiment and have fun.

29 **Fig. 24: 7/4 Ideas**





7/8 Examples

The next section deals with 7/8. You will notice a lot of the same subdivisions in 7/8 as in 7/4. However, 7/8 and 7/4 are two completely different time signatures. 7/4 has seven *quarter notes* to a measure where 7/8 has seven *eighth notes* to a measure—which is equal to three and a half quarter notes.

Let's look at figure 25A. We have a 2+2+3 subdivision, and—like 7/4—this is the most common subdivision for 7/8. The ostinato you can play is in figure 25B—two quarter notes and a dotted quarter note. If we break down the ostinato into sixteenth notes, we have what we see in figure 25C—two groups of four sixteenth notes and two groups of three sixteenth notes. Pay attention to those two groups of three sixteenth notes! Figure 25D is the ostinato we come up with from the sixteenth notes in figure 25C. It's just like 25B, only we have two dotted eighth notes in the end of the measure instead of a dotted quarter note. Figures 25E and 25F are some variations of the previous four examples. Try to mix all the examples together by taking different parts of each example and making your own examples.

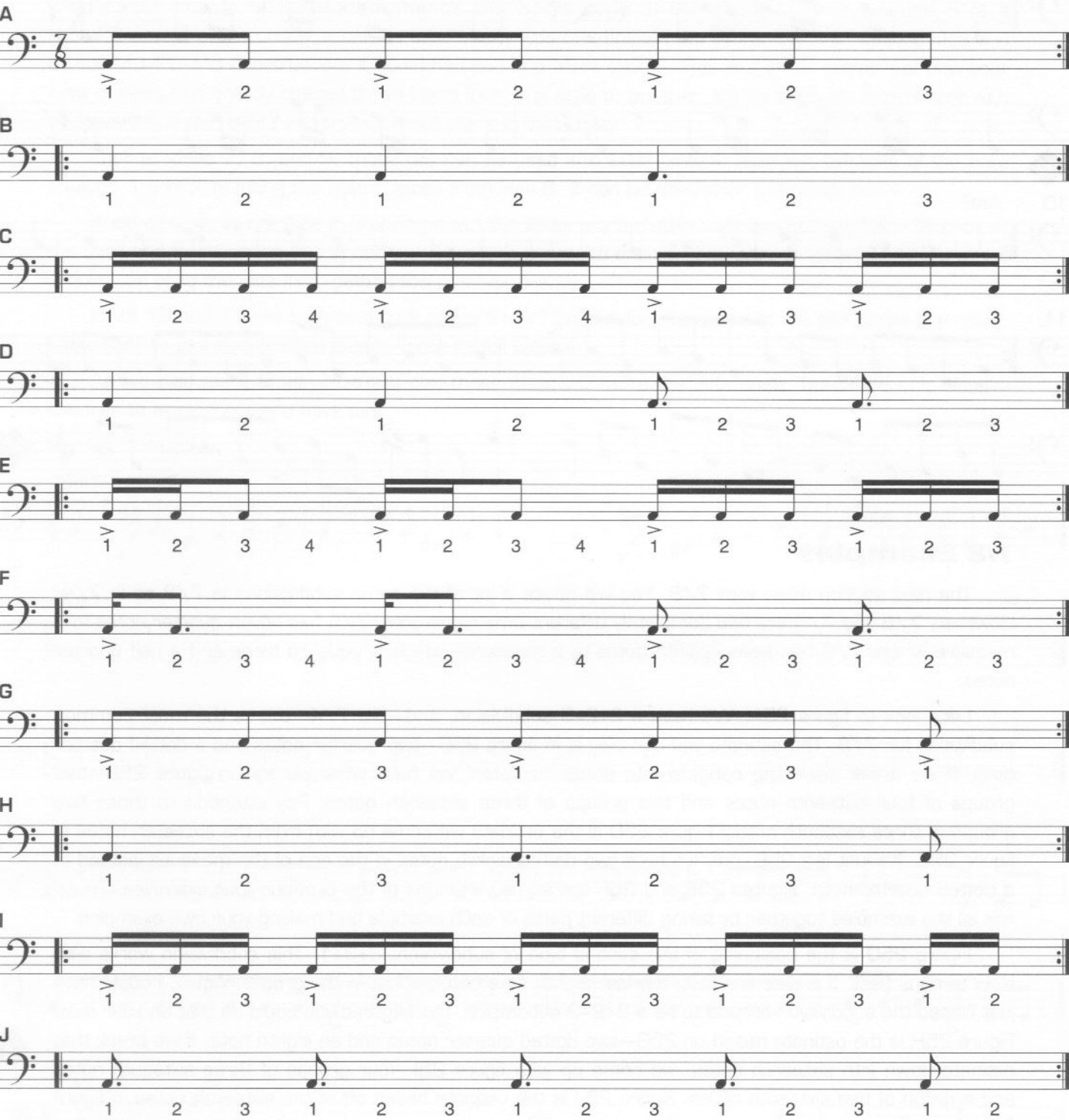
Figure 25G is the beginning of the second type of subdivision: 3+3+1. This subdivision works with slow tempos best. If it gets too fast, the last eighth note can get lost in the groove. Again, I could have just flipped the subdivision around to be a 3+2+2 subdivision, but I figured you could do that on your own. Figure 25H is the ostinato based on 25G—two dotted quarter notes and an eighth note. If we break that ostinato down into sixteenth notes, we come up with figure 25I—four groups of three sixteenth notes and a group of two sixteenth notes. Figure 25J is the ostinato based off of the sixteenth notes in figure 25I—four dotted eighth notes followed by a single eighth note.

Here's what you need to practice before moving on to the 7/8 ideas. First, set up a metronome or a drum machine to 80 bpm. The click will be your quarter note. In 7/8, the eighth note is the largest common denominator. If the click is too hard to play with, turn it off until you learn these examples comfortably. Then practice them with the click.

Like we did with 7/4, instead of having to keep seven quarter notes in our foot, let's keep the ostinato from 25B in our foot and practice tapping figures 25A through 25F. Then try the same thing with the ostinato from 25D in your foot.

When you get to the 3+3+1 subdivision, keep 25H in your foot while practicing 25G, 25H, 25I, and 25J. I know I say this for every time signature, but it's very important to give those dotted eighth notes their full value. Even if you're not actually playing the sixteenth notes, you definitely should be feeling them or even singing them.

Fig. 25: 7/8 Examples



7/8 Ideas

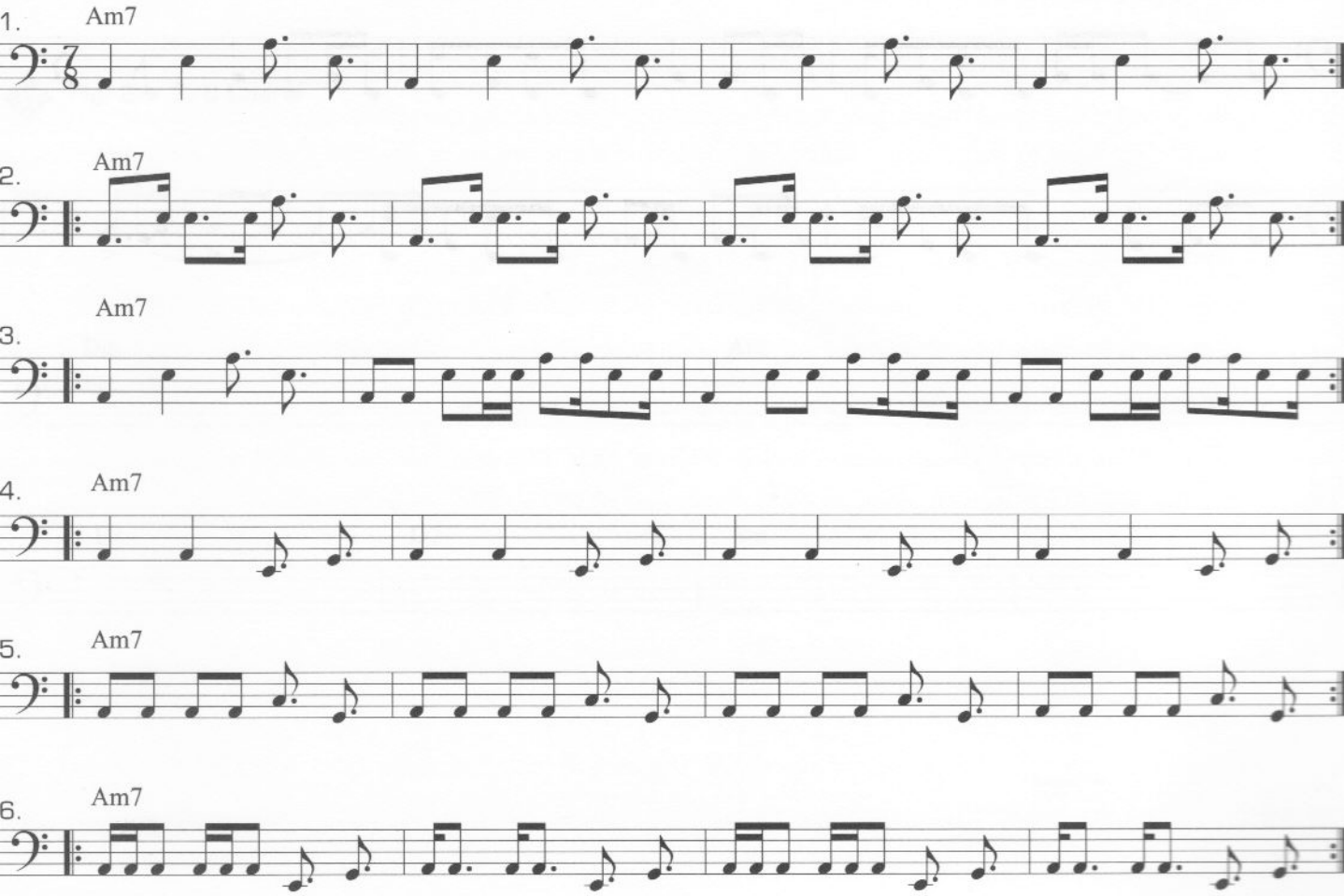
Let's look at some of these 7/8 ideas. Idea 1 is a basic 2+2+3 subdivision but it works very well at any tempo. Be careful of those dotted eighth notes. Idea 2 is based on idea 1, only the first two quarter notes have been changed. Idea 3 is a culmination of both numbers 1 and 2 with a few other rhythmic figures put in. Practice this idea slowly at first. It's not as hard as it looks. These first three ideas work well as a samba due to their root–P5–octave construction. If we look at idea 4, we see it is the exact same thing as idea 1—only my note choices are suited more towards a rock groove. Ideas 5 and 6 are some more rock grooves like number 4. Be aware of the changing rhythmic figures in idea 6.

Ideas 7 and 8 are a couple of funk ideas you can use over 7/8. Again, it may look hard, but once you get the 7/8 feeling, it's not all that hard. All of the ideas in this section are in the 2+2+3 subdivision we discussed earlier. Idea 9 is no different from the other ideas, except for the way it sounds. The note choices are pretty much the same—but listen to the way it's played!

The bonus idea is something that could be played over any 7/8 groove. Don't spend a whole lot of time trying to read it. This is to just give you an idea of what can be played without using the same idea over and over, while sticking to the same subdivision and the same style.

Remember these are merely ideas. As long as you have the basic knowledge of what notes to use for different styles, you can apply that knowledge. For instance, a walking blues could easily be implied over ideas 1 or 4 just by playing the root–M3–P5–m7 of whatever dominant chord you're using. By knowing that most country bass lines consist of a root–P5 below construction, you turn a simple country bass line into a cool 7/8 groove. Use your imagination to come up with different ideas.

33 **Fig. 26: 7/8 Ideas**



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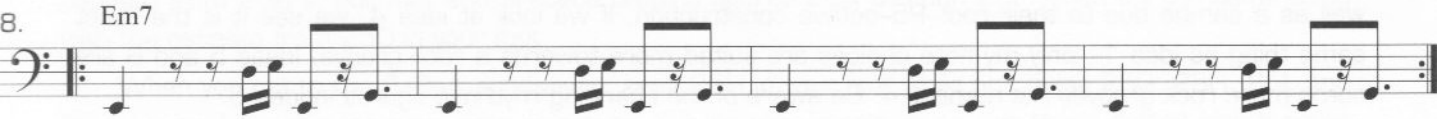
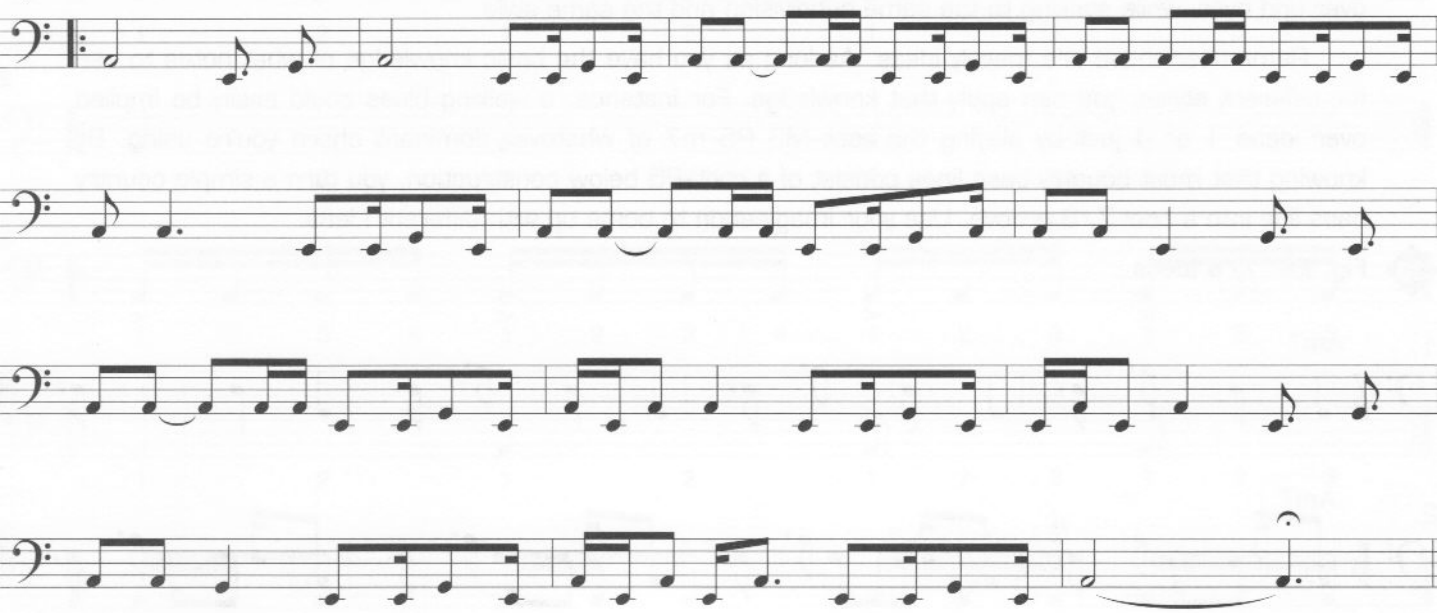
7. Em7

8. Em7



9. Em7

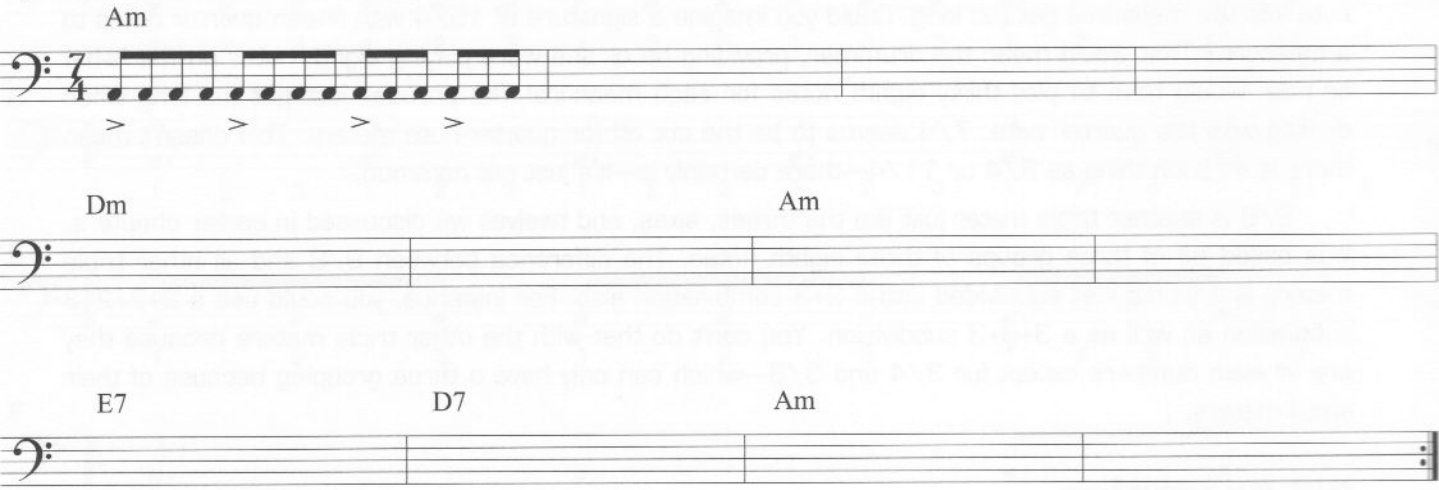
35 Bonus Idea



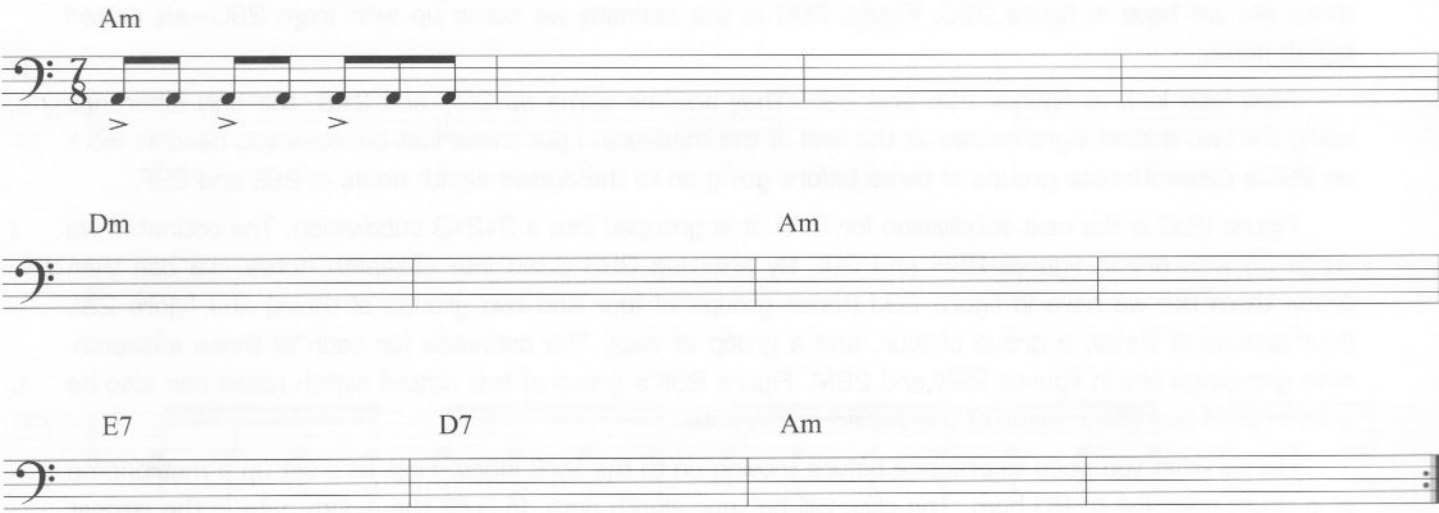
Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band into trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters.

36 **Fig. 27: 7/4 Chart**



37 **Fig. 28: 7/8 Chart**



Chapter 7
9/8

You are probably wondering why we're only covering 9/8 in this chapter and not 9/4; we did it with all the other time signatures by covering the eighth note as well as the quarter note. The reason for this is that when meters start getting larger and larger, staying with the quarter note lets the measures get too long. Could you imagine a signature of 15/4 with fifteen quarter notes to a measure? That would mean the drummer, providing he or she were playing eighth notes on the hi-hat or ride, would have to play thirty eighth notes for each measure! The phrases just get too long when dealing with the quarter note. 7/4 seems to be the cut off for quarter-note meters. This doesn't mean there is no such thing as 9/4 or 11/4—there certainly is—it's just not common.

9/8 is another triple meter just like the threes, sixes, and twelves we discussed in earlier chapters. It is based off of three groups of three eighth notes. The difference between 9/8 and all other triple meters is it works well subdivided into a 2+3 combination also. For instance, you could use a 2+2+2+3 subdivision as well as a 3+3+3 subdivision. You can't do that with the other triple meters because they are all even numbers except for 3/4 and 3/8—which can only have a three grouping because of their small meters.

9/8 Examples

Let's look at some 9/8 examples. Figure 29A is one of the two most common subdivisions for 9/8—a 3+3+3 subdivision. Figure 29B is the ostinato we come up with from figure 29A—three dotted eighth notes. If we break figure 29B down into sixteenth notes, we can group them into six groups of three like we have in figure 29C. Figure 29D is the ostinato we come up with from 29C—six dotted eighth notes.

Now let's look at figures 29E and 29F. They are the same as 29A and 29B, the only difference being the two dotted eighth notes at the end of the measure. I put these last because you need to work on 29C's sixteenth-note groups of three before going on to the dotted eighth notes in 29E and 29F.

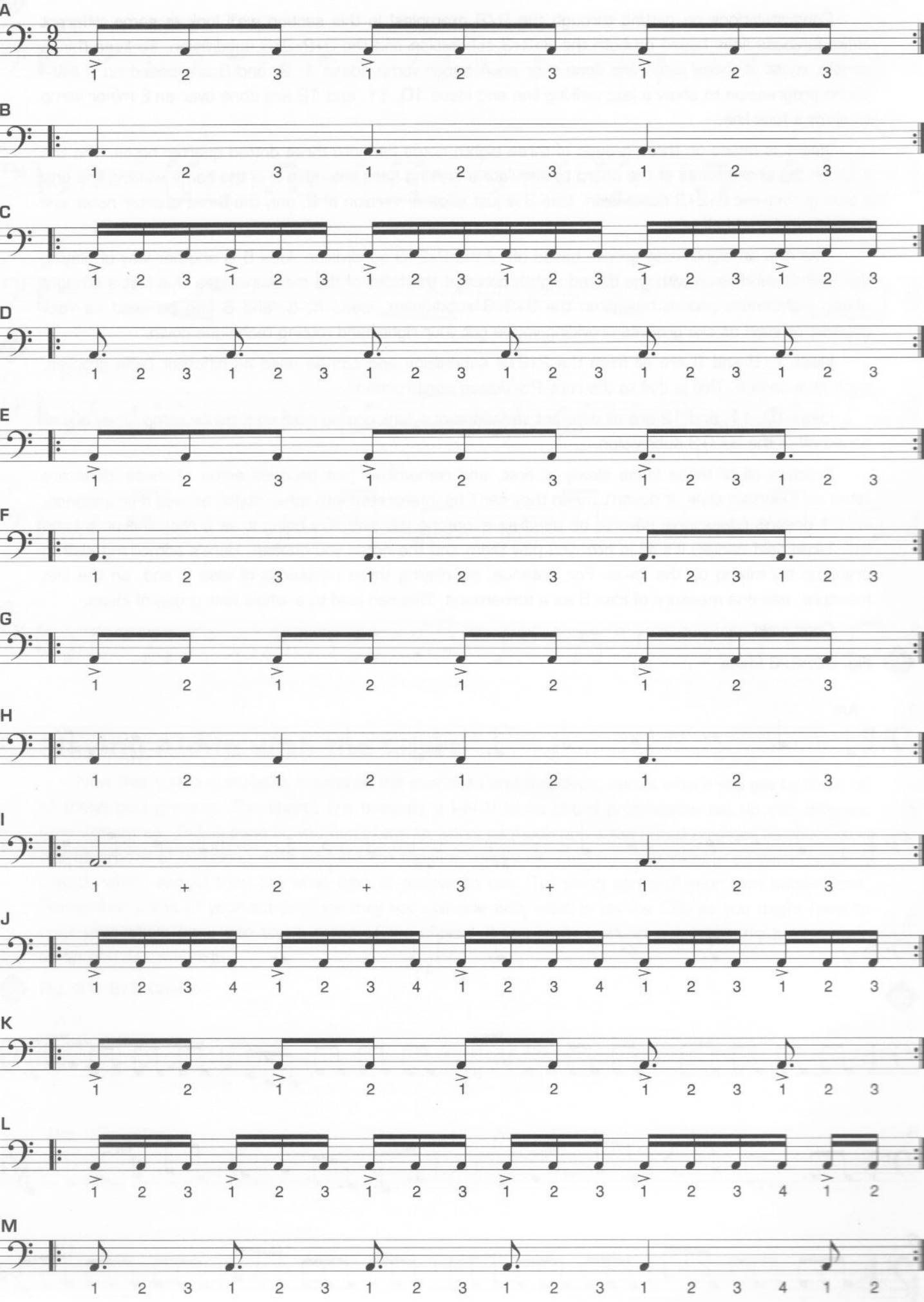
Figure 29G is the next subdivision for 9/8. It is grouped into a 2+2+3 subdivision. The ostinatos we come up with are in figures 29H and 29I. By breaking 29G down into sixteenth notes, we can then group them like we have in figure 29J (three groups of four and two groups of three) and figure 29L (four groups of three, a group of four, and a group of two). The ostinatos for each of these sixteenth-note groupings are in figures 29K and 29M. Figure 29K's group of two dotted eighth notes can also be used in 29H and 29I in place of the dotted eighth note.

Here's what you need to practice before moving on to the 9/8 ideas. First let's set up a metronome or a drum machine to 80 bpm. The click will be your eighth note. In 9/8 the eighth note is the largest common denominator. If the click gets to be too much at first, turn it off until you learn these examples comfortably. Then practice them with the click.

For the first subdivision, practice tapping figure 29B with your foot while tapping figures 29A through 29F with your hands. Be sure to get all the accent markings right. Even in the ostinatos, you should still be feeling those sixteenth-note groupings. When you get to the 2+2+2+3 subdivision, practice tapping figures 29G through 29K while tapping 29H with your foot. Make sure to follow all accent markings.

Figures 29L and 29M are extras. Feel free to work on them if you have time. Try practicing 29L with your hands while tapping 29M with your feet.

Fig. 29: 9/8 Examples



9/8 Ideas

Congratulations on getting through the 9/8 examples! In this section we'll look at some different ideas for bass lines based on both the 3+3+3 subdivision and the 2+2+2+3 subdivision. To keep things simple, most of these ideas are done over an A minor vamp. Ideas 1, 2, and 3 are based on a II–V–I chord progression to show a jazz walking line and ideas 10, 11, and 12 are done over an E minor vamp to show a funk line.

Idea 1 is based on three groups of three eighth notes tied into three dotted quarter notes. The line outlines the chord tones of the chord to simulate a walking bass line. Idea 2 is the same walking line only it's done over the 2+2+3 subdivision. Idea 3 is just another version of 2, only the three quarter notes are tied into a dotted half note.

Idea 4 is an eighth-note groove based off of the 2+2+3 subdivision. Idea 5 is another way of playing the 3+3+3 subdivision with the dotted eighth notes at the front of the measure. Idea 6 is just a straight ahead eighth-note groove based on the 3+3+3 subdivision. Ideas 4, 5, and 6 can be used as rock grooves or even as ska grooves providing you've got your right hand muting technique down.

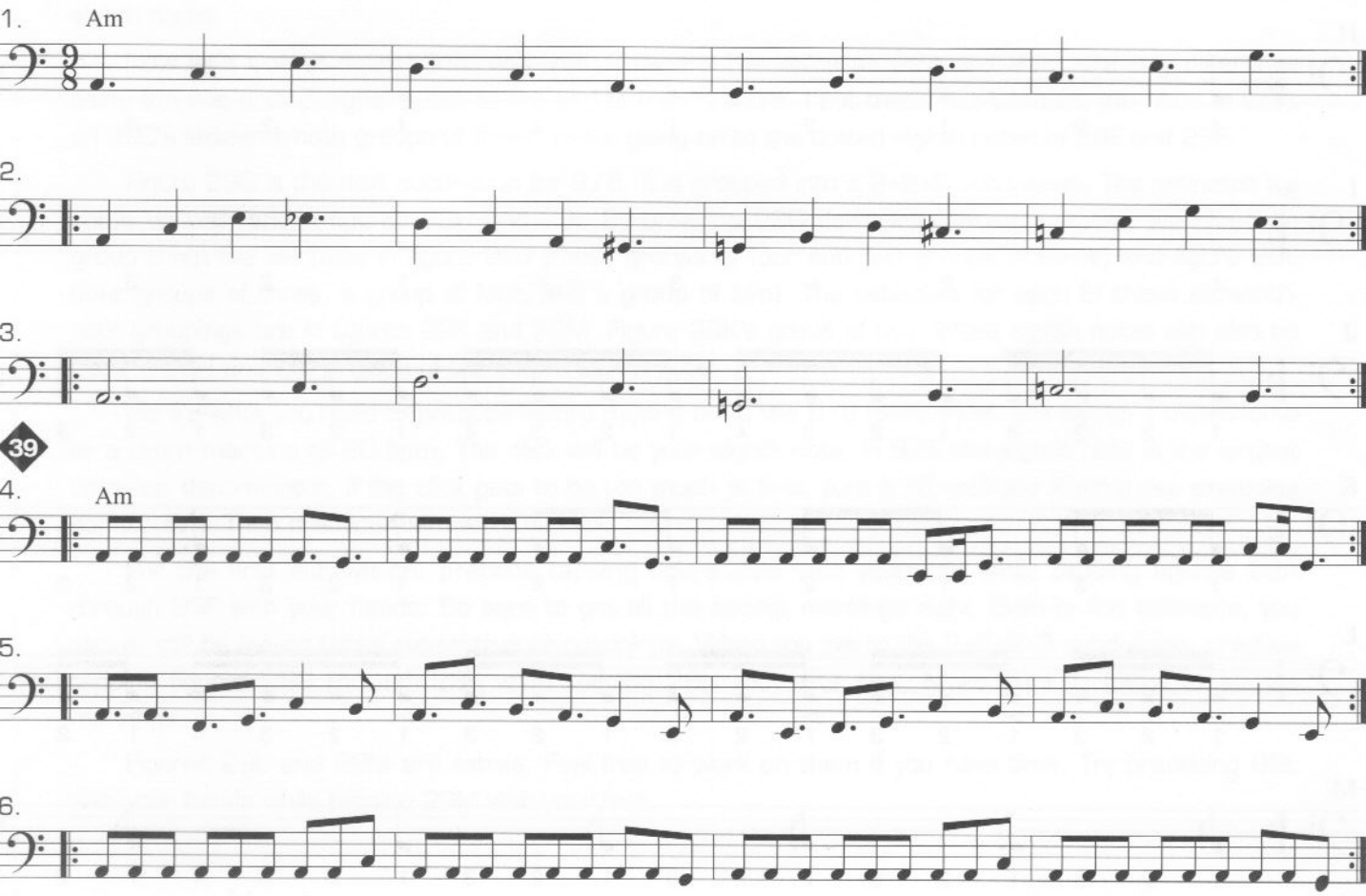
Ideas 7, 8 and 9 are all from the 2+2+3 subdivision and can be used as different Latin grooves, such as a samba. This is due to the root–P5–octave construction.

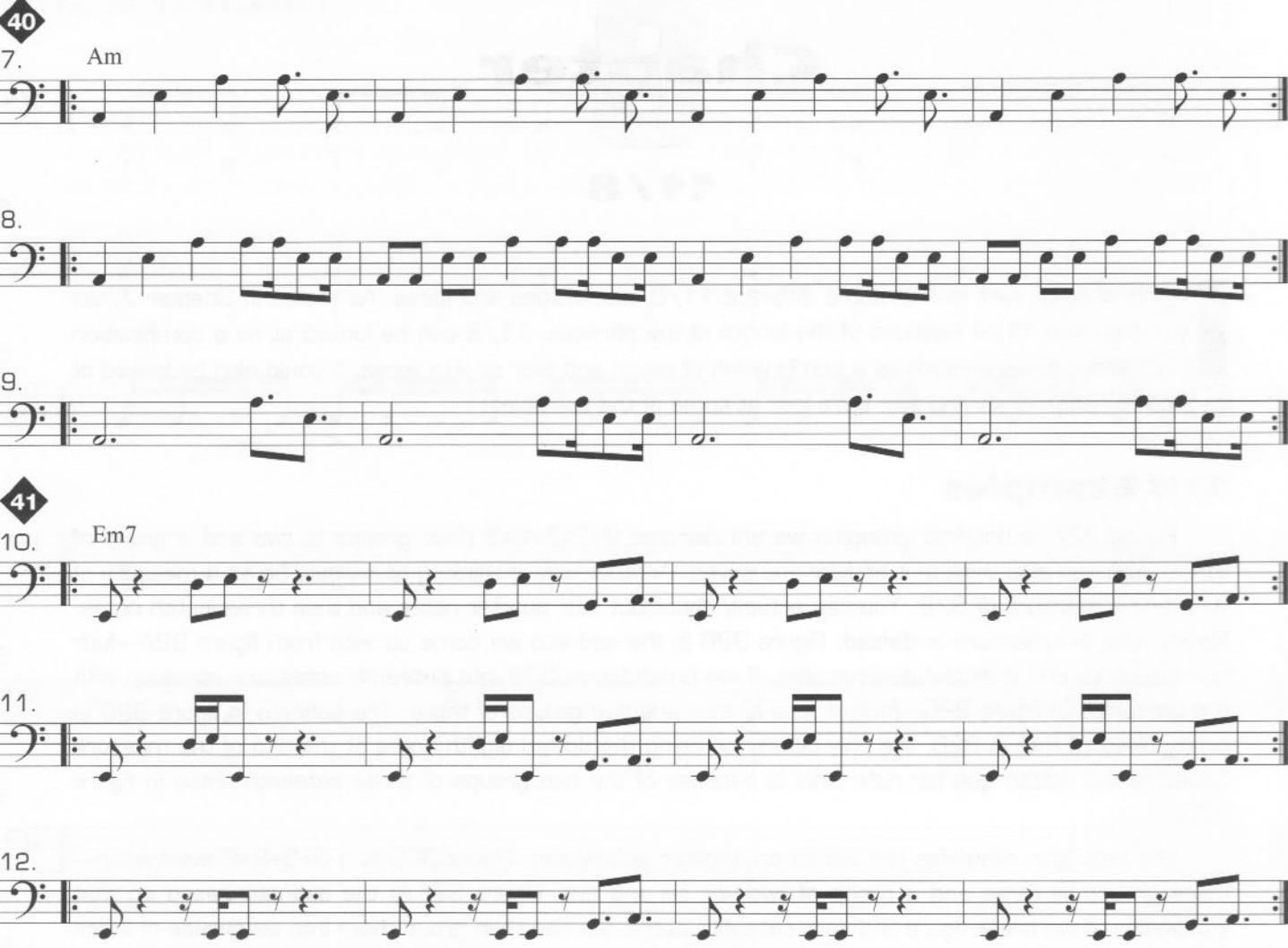
Ideas 10, 11, and 12 are all different variations of a funk groove over an E minor vamp. They are all based off of the 3+3+3 subdivision.

Practice all of these ideas slowly at first, and remember: just because some of these ideas are listed as a certain style, it doesn't mean they can't be interpreted into other styles as well. For instance, idea 1 doesn't necessarily have to be used as a walking jazz line. Try using it as a rock line or a Latin line. Like I said earlier, it's all in how you play them and the notes you choose. Here's something else to practice: try mixing up the ideas. For instance, try playing three measures of idea 4 and, on the last measure, use one measure of idea 5 as a turnaround. This can lead to a whole new group of ideas.

Good luck!

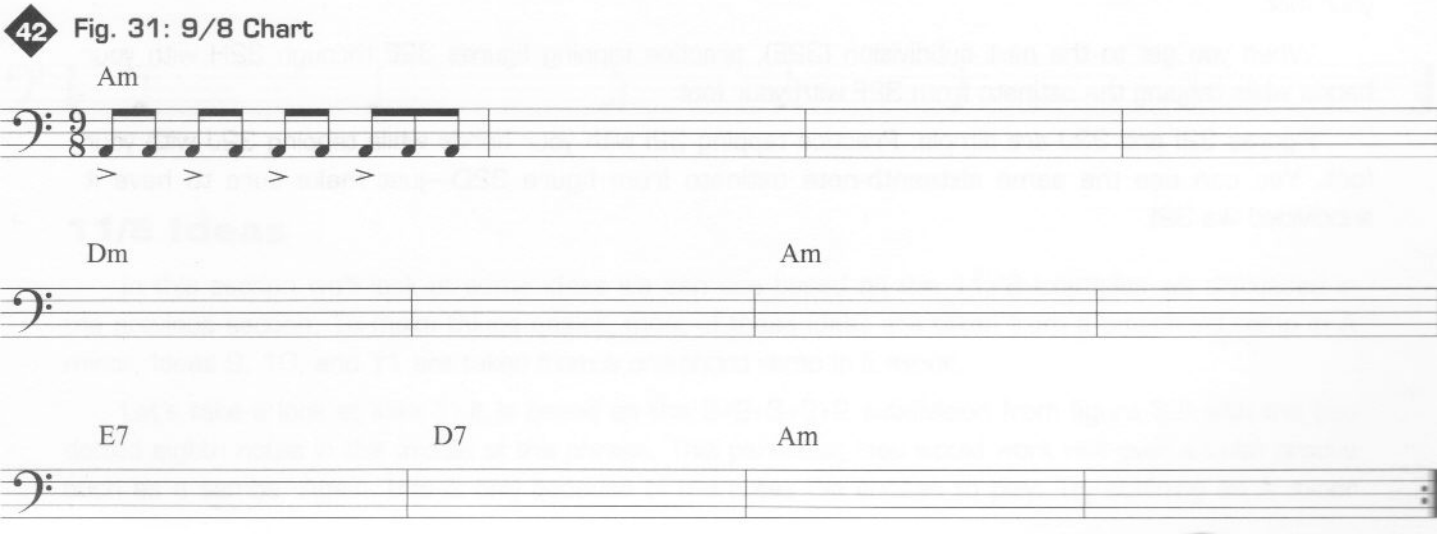
38 **Fig. 30: 9/8 Ideas**





Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as you do the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band into trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters.



Chapter 8

11/8

In this chapter we'll look at some different 11/8 subdivisions and ideas. As stated in Chapter 7, we won't go into 11/4 because of the length of the phrases. 11/8 can be looked at as a combination of different meters—such as a combination of seven and four or visa versa. It could also be looked at as a combination of six and five. Let's look at some of the examples!

11/8 Examples

Figure 32A is the first grouping we will discuss: 2+2+2+2+3 (four groups of two and a group of three). You can also think of it as four and seven. Another way of thinking of it would be as a measure of 4/4 and a measure of 3/8. You can actually count out four quarter notes and then three eighth notes. Notice how the measure is divided. Figure 32B is the ostinato we come up with from figure 32A—four quarter notes and a dotted quarter note. If we break figure 32B into sixteenth notes, we come up with the groupings in figure 32C—four groups of four and two groups of three. The ostinato in figure 32D is pretty close to that in 32B, the only difference being the dotted eighth notes at the end of the measure replacing the dotted quarter note; this is because of the two groups of three sixteenth notes in figure 32C.

The next four examples are based on another subdivision. Figure 32E is a 3+3+3+2 subdivision—three groups of three and a group of two—or six and five. Figure 32F is the ostinato based on that subdivision. If we break figure 32F into sixteenth notes, we can then group them into six groups of three and a group of four like we have in figure 32G. The ostinato in 32H is what we come up with from 32G—six dotted eighth notes and a quarter note.

Figure 32I is another subdivision based on figure 32A. This time it's turned around as a 2+2+3+2+2 subdivision. Be sure to accent the downbeat of the measure because it's easy to turn it around into figure 32A if you're not paying attention. Figure 32J is the ostinato we get from 32I.

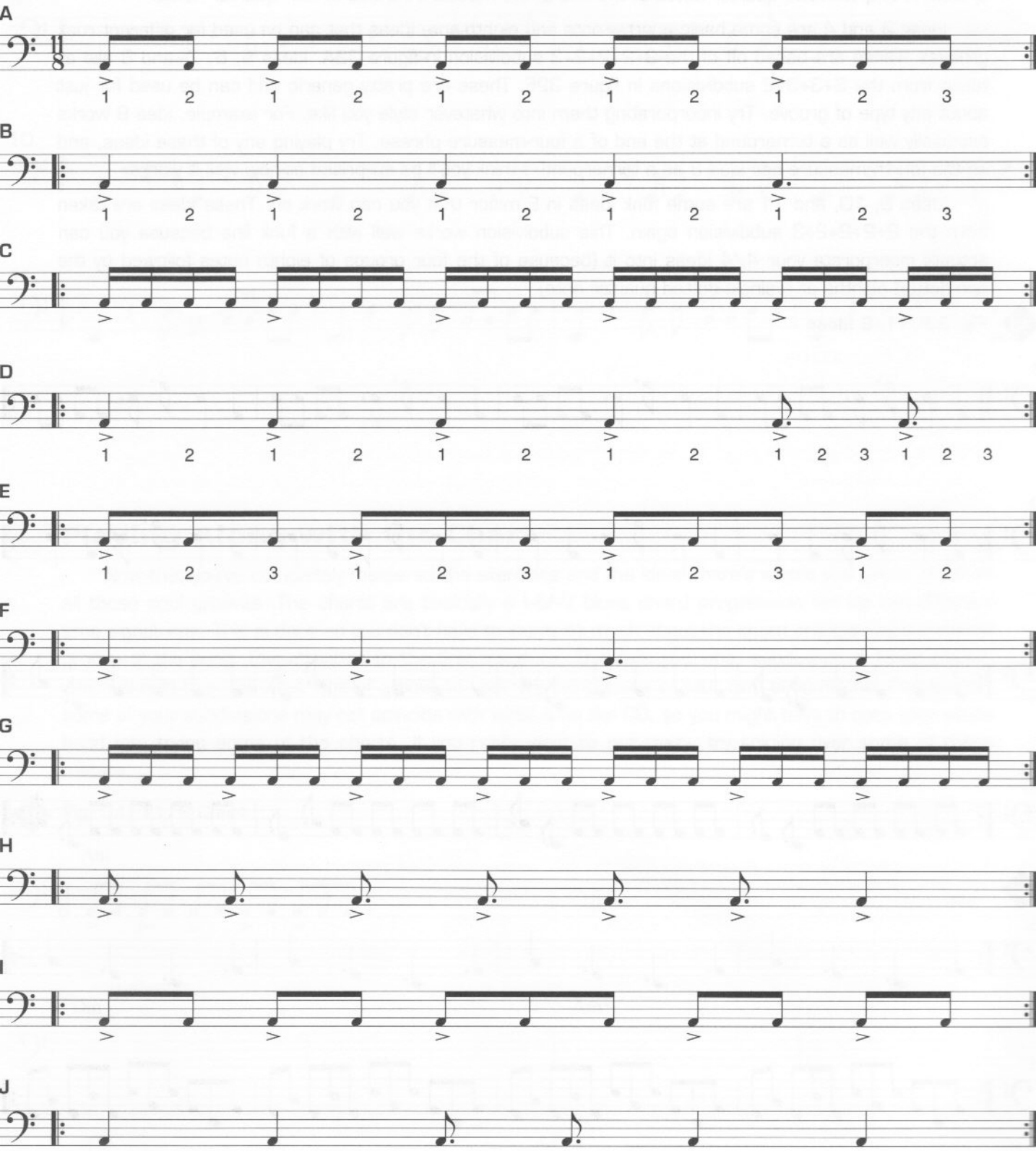
Here's what you need to practice before moving on to the 11/8 ideas. First set a metronome or a drum machine to 80 bpm. The click will be your eighth note. In 11/8, the eighth note is the largest common denominator. If the click is too hard to play with, turn it off until you learn these examples comfortably. Then practice them with the click.

For the first subdivision, practice tapping figures 32A through 32D with your hands while tapping the ostinato from 32B with your foot. Then practice the same thing, only with the ostinato from 32D in your foot.

When you get to the next subdivision (32E), practice tapping figures 32E through 32H with your hands while tapping the ostinato from 32F with your foot.

Figures 32I and 32J are simple. Practice tapping 32I with your hands while tapping 32J with your foot. You can use the same sixteenth-note ostinato from figure 32D—just make sure to have it subdivided like 32I.

Fig. 32: 11/8 Examples



11/8 Ideas

In this section we'll look at some ideas we can use based on the 11/8 examples we discussed in the previous section. To make things easier, most of these ideas are taken from a one-chord vamp in A minor. Ideas 9, 10, and 11 are taken from a one-chord vamp in E minor.

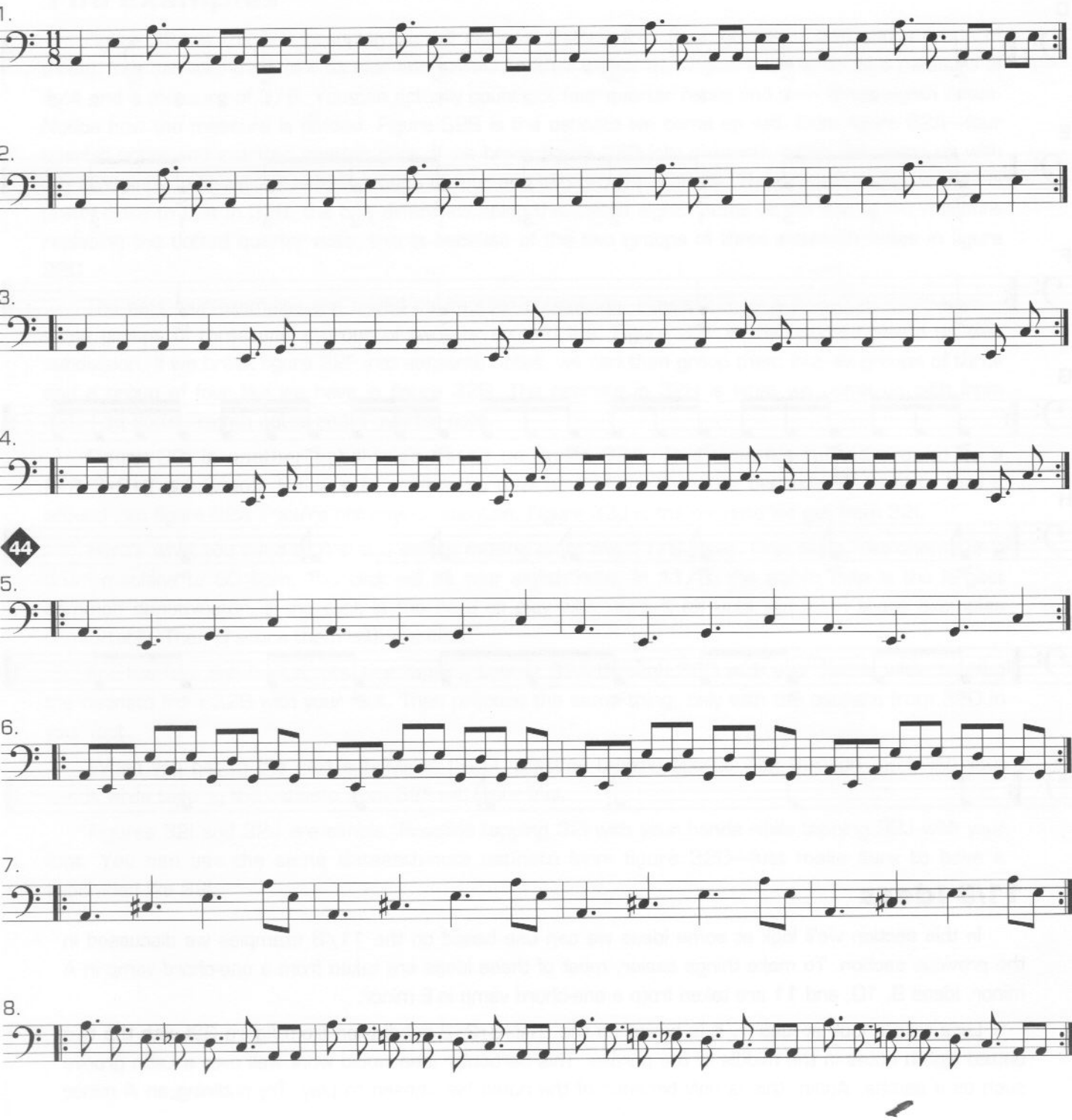
Let's take a look at idea 1. It is based on the 2+2+3+2+2 subdivision from figure 32I with the two dotted eighth notes in the middle of the phrase. This particular idea would work well over a Latin groove such as a samba. Again, this is only because of the notes I've chosen to play. Try outlining an A minor

arpeggio with the same subdivision, and it could turn into a minor blues idea. Idea 2 is another variation of idea 1, only with two quarter notes at the end of the measure instead of four quarter notes.

Ideas 3 and 4 are some basic quarter-note and eighth-note ideas that can be used for different rock grooves. These are based off of the 2+2+2+2+3 subdivision in figure 32A. Ideas 5, 6, 7, and 8 are all taken from the 3+3+3+2 subdivisions in figure 32E. These are pretty generic and can be used for just about any type of groove. Try incorporating them into whatever style you like. For example, idea 9 works especially well as a turnaround at the end of a four-measure phrase. Try playing any of these ideas, and on the fourth measure use idea 8 as a turnaround. I think you'll be surprised at how well it works.

Ideas 9, 10, and 11 are some funk ideas in E minor that you can work on. These ideas are taken from the 2+2+2+2+3 subdivision again. This subdivision works well with a funk line because you can actually incorporate your 4/4 ideas into it (because of the four groups of eighth notes followed by the two dotted eighths or a single dotted quarter note).

43 **Fig. 33: 11/8 Ideas**



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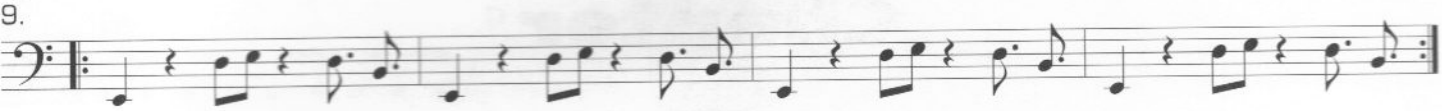


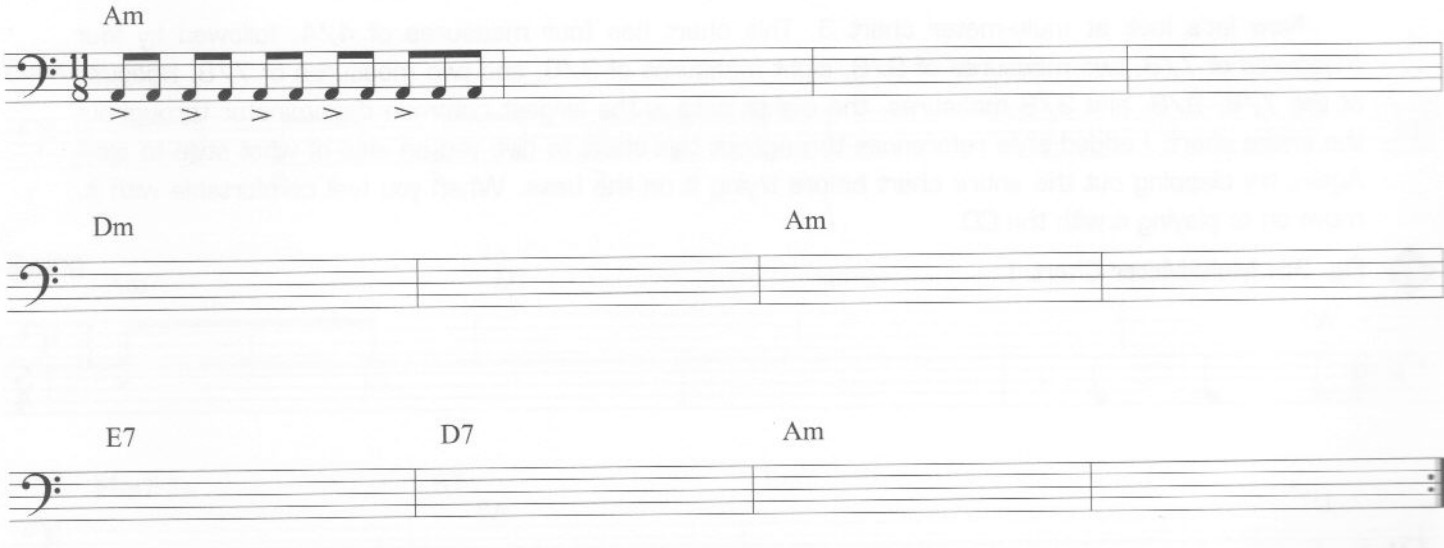
10.

11.

Playing Along with the Chart

Now that you've completely mastered the exercises and the ideas, here's where you get to show off all those cool grooves. The charts are basically a I–IV–V blues chord progression set up into different time signatures. This is done so you don't have to worry as much about the chord changes as the overall groove of the song. Pay attention to the first measure. This tells you what subdivision is being played, which should then tell what type of groove to use. Try using some of your own subdivisions. Remember, some of your subdivisions may not coincide with what is on the CD, so you might have to coax your whole band into trying some of the charts. If you really want to get crazy, try soloing over some of these meters.

46 **Fig. 34: 11/8 Chart**



Chapter 9

Multiple Meter Charts

One of the most difficult things about playing in odd meters is being able to play from one time signature to another without missing a beat. So far, we've learned how to play in a number of different meters. Now what would happen if we were to combine some of those different meters in a song? This is where it gets tricky. This chapter will help you deal with being able to play multiple meters within a chart. What you learn in this chapter applies to all meters, even going from a measure of 4/4 to a measure of 2/4, which is quite common in some songs.

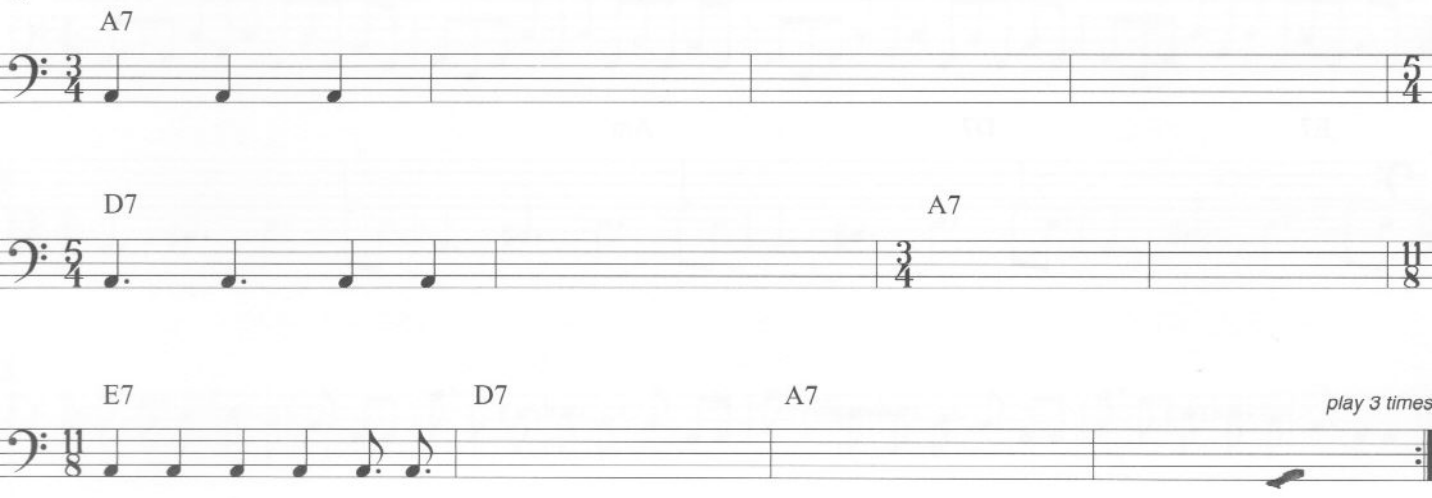
Let's look at multi-meter chart 1. This twelve-bar blues may look pretty intimidating, but it's not as hard as it looks. First, let's set a metronome to about 186 bpm. This may sound fast, but remember: the click is going to be the eighth note. Even though we have a chart that goes from 3/4 to 5/4 to 3/4 to 11/8, the largest common denominator between all these meters is the eighth note. This means the eighth note will remain constant throughout the entire chart; going from one time signature to another will not affect the eighth note. Remember, the eighth note will be the same whether you're in 3/4, 5/4, or 11/8.

The subdivisions have been added at the beginning of each time signature to let you know what to play throughout the piece. Before playing along with the CD, try clapping the rhythms through the piece first. When you get comfortable with the rhythms, try playing along with the CD. Be sure to add your own stylistic preferences to the chart. Just because it's a blues chord progression doesn't mean it has to be a blues song!

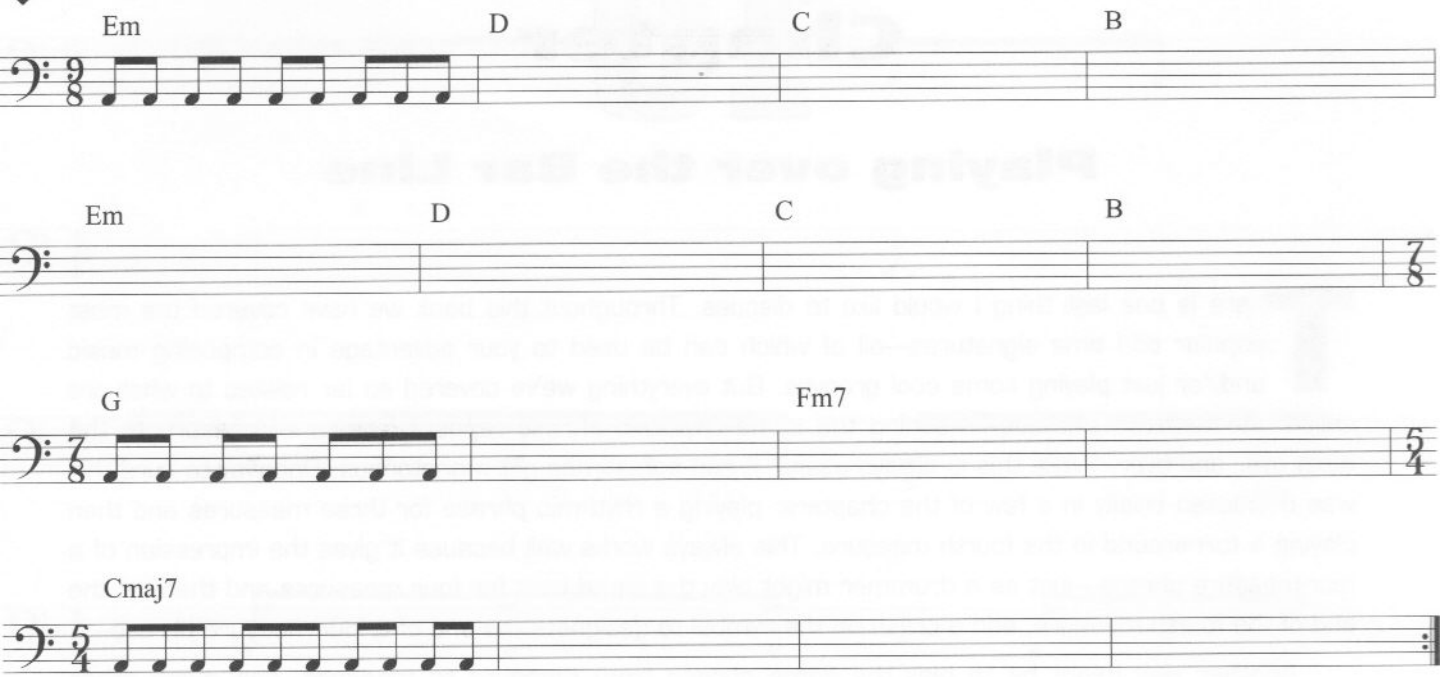
Multi-meter chart 2 is yet another conglomeration of time changes. We've got eight measures of 9/8, then four measures of 7/8, and then four measures of 5/4. Guess what the largest common denominator is between all the time changes? If you said the eighth note, you're right. Again, choose your own stylistic preferences for this chart. Practice clapping through it and then go ahead and play it with the CD.

Now let's look at multi-meter chart 3. This chart has four measures of 4/4, followed by four measures of 7/8, two measures of 9/8, eight measures of 3/8, and two measures of 7/8. Because of the 7/8, 9/8, and 3/8 measures, the eighth note is the largest common denominator throughout the entire chart. I added style references throughout this chart to give you an idea of what style to play. Again, try clapping out the entire chart before trying it on the bass. When you feel comfortable with it, move on to playing it with the CD.

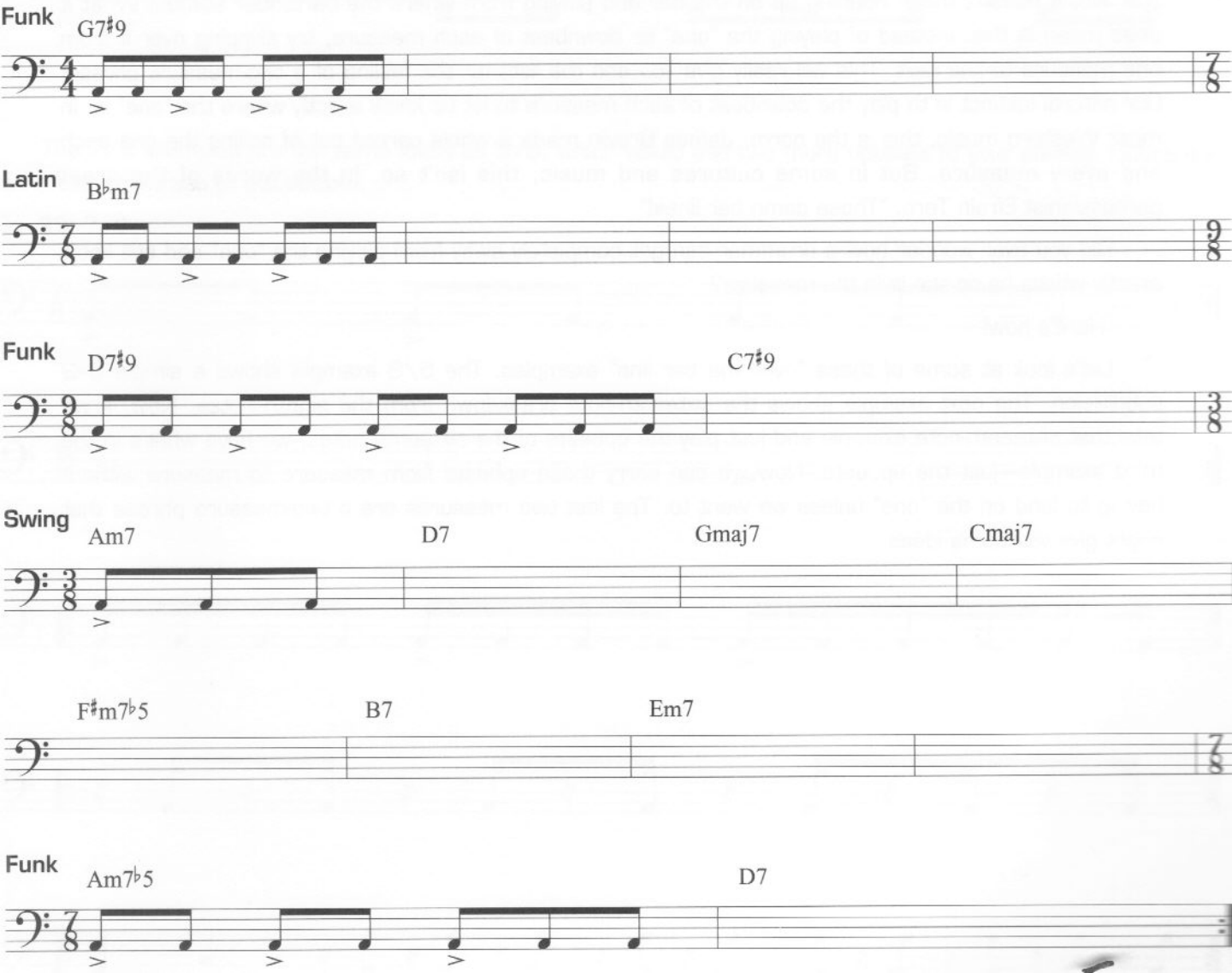
47 **Fig. 35: Multi-Meter Chart 1**



48 Fig. 36: Multi-Meter Chart 2



49 Fig. 37: Multi-Meter Chart 3



Chapter 10

Playing over the Bar Line

There is one last thing I would like to discuss. Throughout this book we have covered the most popular odd time signatures—all of which can be used to your advantage in composing music and/or just playing some cool grooves. But everything we've covered so far relates to what are called one-measure phrases—meaning the same rhythmic phrase repeats from one measure to the next, over and over. While this is always useful, it can sometimes get monotonous. One way to cure this was discussed briefly in a few of the chapters: playing a rhythmic phrase for three measures and then playing a turnaround in the fourth measure. This always works well because it gives the impression of a four-measure phrase—just as a drummer might play the same beat for four measures and then, at the end of the fourth measure, add a crash on the cymbal to designate the end of a four-measure phrase.

Another way might be to play the same phrase from measure to measure, only every other measure adding a rest(s) where there might have been a note(s) played in the previous measure, thus giving your two-measure phrase more space.

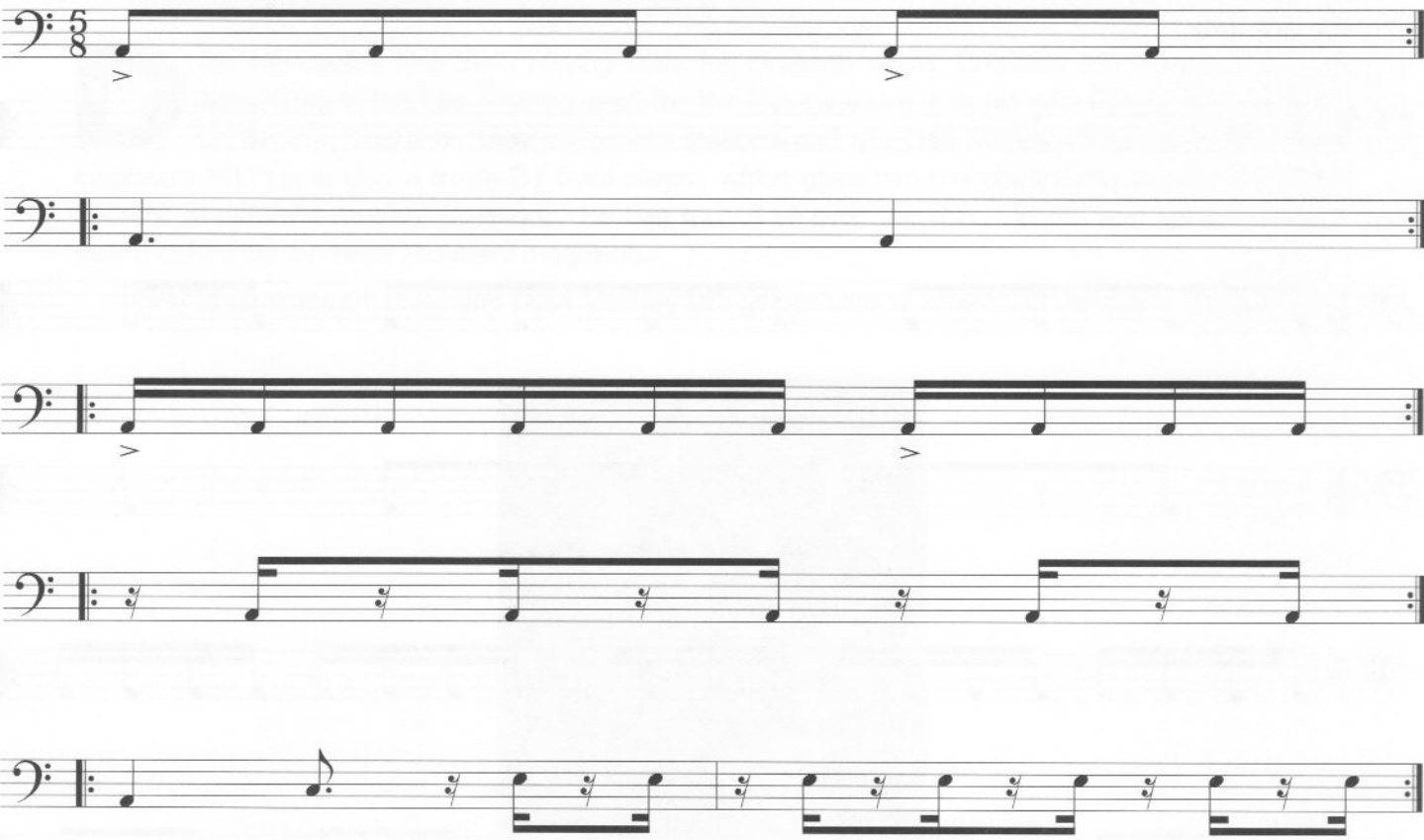
The other way to add some "spice" to your phrases is to do what's called *playing over the bar line*. No, it doesn't mean hopping up on the bar and playing from where the bartender stands! What it does mean is this: instead of playing the "one" or downbeat of each measure, try skipping over it from one measure to the next. This will really give you and the listener the feeling of a two-measure phrase. Our natural instinct is to play the downbeat of each measure to let us know exactly where the "one" is. In most Western music, this is the norm. James Brown made a whole career out of nailing the one each and every measure. But in some cultures and music, this isn't so. In the words of the great percussionist Efrain Toro: "Those damn bar lines!"

Did you ever wonder how a drummer can get completely away from playing the "one" and still know exactly where he or she is in the measure?

Here's how!

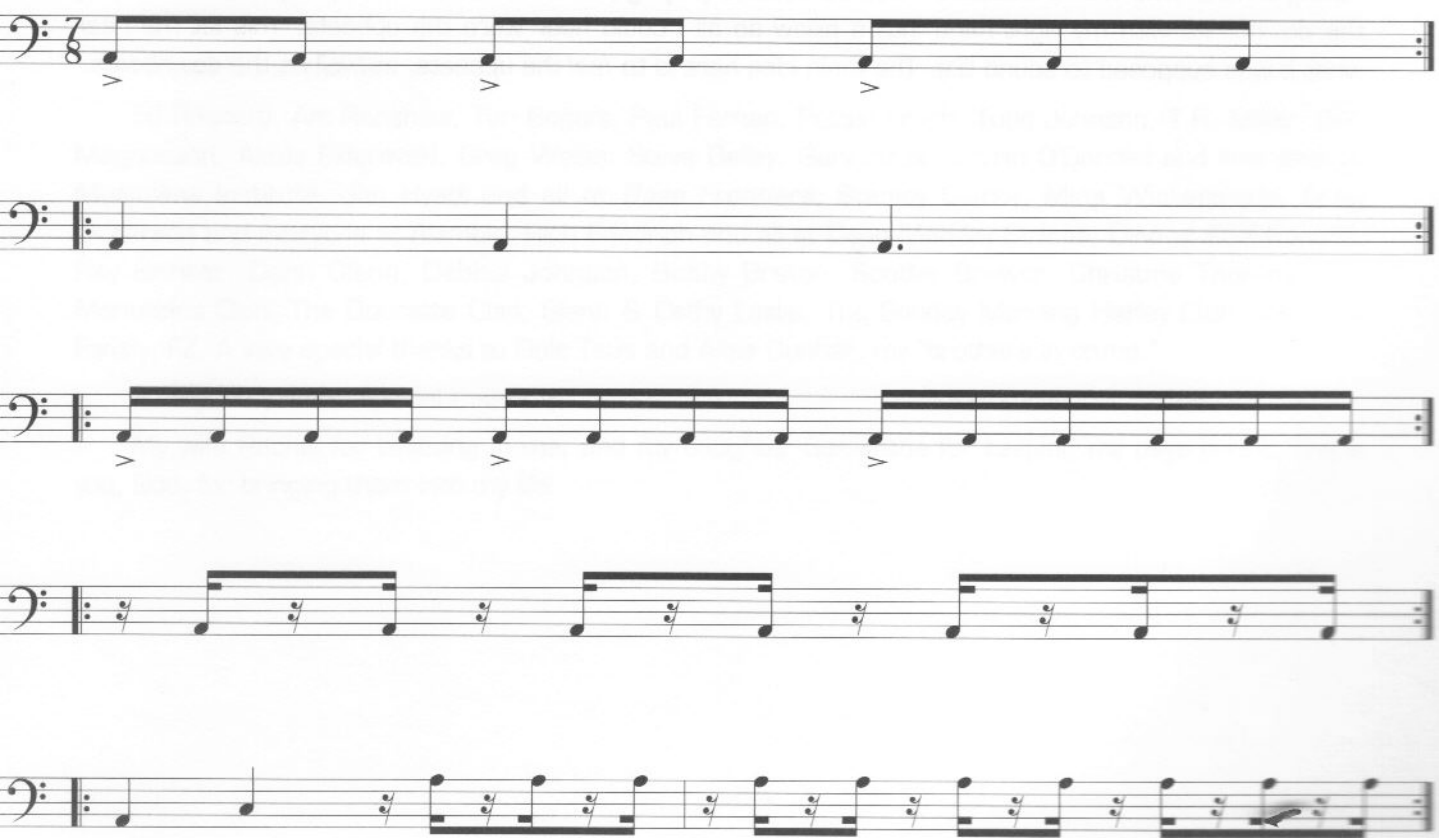
Let's look at some of these "over the bar line" examples. The 5/8 example shows a simple 3+2 subdivision. The next example shows the sixteenth-note breakdown from the eighth notes. Now, if we take that sixteenth-note example and just play the upbeats of the sixteenth notes, we have what's in the third example—just the upbeats. Now we can carry those upbeats from measure to measure without having to land on the "one" unless we want to. The last two measures are a two-measure phrase that might give you some ideas.

Fig. 38: 5/8



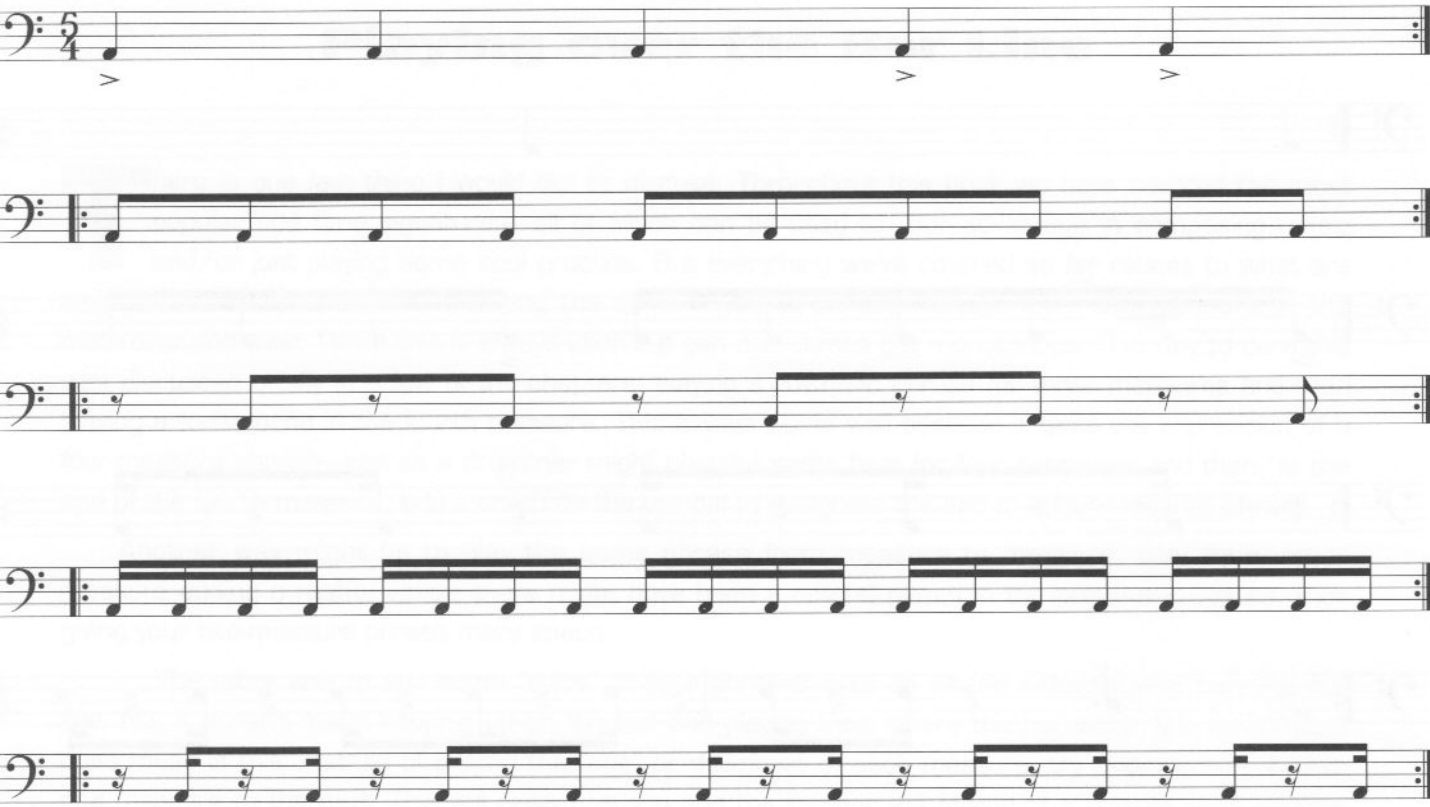
The 7/8 examples are the same ideas as 5/8, which would add two more upbeats to your phrase. Notice the two-measure phrase at the bottom.

Fig. 39: 7/8



When dealing with quarter-note meters such as the 5/4 examples, you can use either the upbeats on the eighth notes or the upbeats on the sixteenth notes.

Fig. 40: 5/4

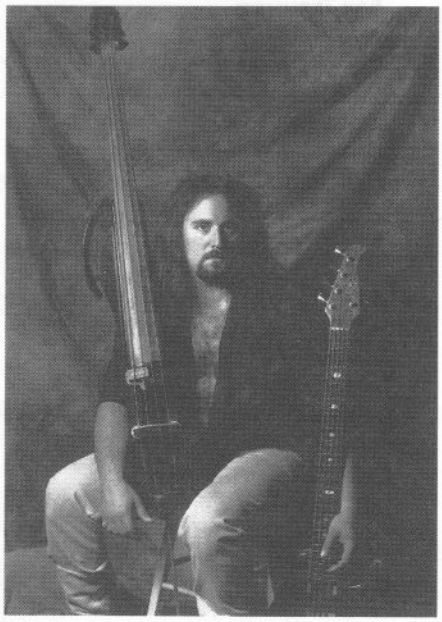


Try practicing clapping these examples going from the sixteenth notes and eighth notes to just the upbeats. Do this while tapping the ostinato with your foot. This may not come easily at first. I remember having a hard time with it because I was so used to playing just downbeats. To help myself, I would play the downbeats with my right hand into a pillow so all I could hear were the upbeats. This let me hear what it was supposed to sound like. The main idea here is to *feel* the upbeats, as well as the downbeats.

About the Author

Dino Monoxelos has been playing bass for nineteen years. Originally from Boston, he has been living in the Los Angeles area for the last six years with his wife Rachel and daughter Samantha. There he teaches private lessons and the Odd Meter workshop at Musicians Institute's BIT. He is also a freelance bass player, which gives him the opportunity to play in a great number of different musical situations. He has toured all over the U.S., Japan, and Europe. Dino is also a columnist for *Bass Frontiers* magazine.

Dino uses Alembic basses and Dean Markley strings because he believes in using only the best!!!



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